

















JOHN REDMOND'S LAST YEARS









*Russell, London.*

*John Redmond. 1918.*  
*Aged 61.*

LONDON: EDWARD ARNOLD.



# JOHN REDMOND'S LAST YEARS

BY  
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## PREFACE

IN writing this book, I have had access to my late leader's papers for the period beginning with the war. These were placed at my disposal by his son, Major William Archer Redmond, D.S.O., M.P. I had also the consent of Mrs. Redmond to my undertaking the task. But for the book and for the opinions expressed in it I am solely responsible. No condition having been imposed upon me, it seemed best, for many reasons, that it should be written, as it has been written, without consultation.

A writer in whom such a trust has been placed may well be at a loss how to express his gratitude, but can never convey the measure of his anxiety. From those who cherish Redmond's memory, and especially from those who were nearest to him in comradeship and affection, I must only crave the indulgence which should be accorded to sincere effort. Differences of interpretation there will be in any review of past events, and others can claim with justice that on many points they were better situated for full understanding than was I. Yet for the period which is specially studied, if there is failure in comprehension it cannot be excused by lack of opportunity to be thoroughly informed.

To readers at large I would say this—that if any sentence in these pages be uncandid or ungenerous, it is most unworthy to be found in the record of such a man.

S. G.





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Shall a man understand,  
He shall know bitterness because his kind,  
Being perplexed of mind,  
Hold issues even that are nothing mated.  
And he shall give  
Counsel out of his wisdom that none shall hear  
And steadfast in vain persuasion must he live,  
And unabated  
Shall his temptation be.

JOHN DRINKWATER, in *Abraham Lincoln*.



# JOHN REDMOND'S LAST YEARS

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY

#### I

THE time has not yet come to write the biography of John Redmond. Not until the history of the pledge-bound Irish Parliamentary party can be treated freely, fully and impartially as a chapter closed and ended will it be possible to record in detail the life of a man who was associated with it almost from its beginning and who from the opening of this century guided it with almost growing authority to the statutory accomplishment of its desperate task ; who knew, in it and for it, all vicissitudes of fortune and who gave to it without stint or reservation his whole life's energy from earliest manhood to the grave.

But when the war came, unforeseen, shifting all political balances, transmuting the greatest political issues, especially those of which the Irish question is a type, it imposed upon men and upon nations, but above all on the leaders of nations, swift and momentous decisions. Because that critical hour presented to Redmond's vision a great opportunity which he must either seize single-handed or let it for ever pass by ; because he rose to the height of the occasion with the courage which counts upon and commands success ; because he sought by his own motion to swing the whole mass and weight

of a nation's feeling into a new direction—for all these reasons his last years were different in kind from any that had gone before ; and as such they admit of and demand separate study. Intelligent comprehension of what he aimed at, what he achieved, and what forces defeated him in these last years of his life is urgently needed, not for the sake of his memory, but for Ireland's sake ; because until his policy is understood there is little chance that Irishmen should attain what he aspired to win for Ireland—the strength and dignity of a free and united nation.

It is of Redmond's policy for Ireland in relation to the war, and to the events which in Ireland arose out of the war, that this book is mainly designed to treat. Yet to make that policy intelligible some history is needed of the startling series of political developments which the war interrupted but did not terminate—and which, though still recent, are blurred in public memory by all that has intervened. Further back still, a brief review of his early career must be given, not only to set the man's figure in relation to his environment, but to show that this final phase was in reality no new departure, no break with his past, but a true though a divergent evolution from all that had gone before.

Ireland, although so small in extent and population, is none the less a country of many and locally varying racial strains ; and John Redmond sprang from one of the most typical. He was a Wexfordman ; that is to say, he came from the part of Ireland where if you cross the Channel there is least difference between the land you leave and the land you sail to ; where the sea-divided peoples have been always to some extent assimilated. Here in the twelfth century the first Norman-Welsh invaders came across. The leader of their first party, Raymond Le Gros, landed at a point between Wexford and Waterford ; the town of Wexford

was his first capture; and where he began his conquest he settled. From this stock the Redmond name and line descend.

Thus John Redmond came from an invading strain in which Norman and Celt were already blended; and he grew up in a country thickly settled with men whose ancestors came along with his from across the water. Till a century ago the barony of Forth retained a dialect of its own which was in effect such English as men spoke before Chaucer began to write; and even to-day in any Wexford fair or market you will see among the strong, well-nourished, prosperous farmers many faces and figures which an artist might easily assimilate to an athletic example of the traditional John Bull. Redmond himself, hawk-faced and thick-bodied, might have been taken for no bad reincarnation of Raymond Le Gros. To this extent he was less of a Celt than many of his countrymen; but he was assuredly none the less Irish because he was a Wexfordman. The county of his birth was the county which had made the greatest resistance to English power in Ireland since Sarsfield and his "Wild Geese" crossed to Flanders. Born in 1857, he grew up in a country-side full of memories of events then only some sixty years old; he knew and spoke with many men who had been out with pike or fowling-piece in 1798. Rebel was to him from boyhood up a name of honour; and this was not only a phase of boyish enthusiasm. In his mature manhood, speaking as leader of the Irish party, he told the House of Commons plainly that in his deliberate judgment Ireland's situation justified an appeal to arms, and that if rebellion offered a reasonable prospect of gaining freedom for a united Ireland he would counsel rebellion on the instant.

But if he was always and admittedly a potential rebel, no man was ever less a revolutionary. As much a constitutionalist as Hampden or Washington, he was so by temperament and by inheritance. The tradition of

parliamentary service had been in his family for two generations. Two years after his birth his great-uncle, John Edward Redmond, from whom he got his baptismal names, was elected unopposed as Liberal member for the borough of Wexford, where his statue stands in the market-place, commemorating good service rendered. Much of the rich flat land which lies along the railway from Wexford to Rosslare Harbour was reclaimed by this Redmond's enterprise from tidal slob. On his death in 1872 the seat passed to his nephew William Archer Redmond, whose two sons were John and William Redmond, with whom this book deals. Thus the present Major William Archer Redmond, M.P., represents four continuous generations of the same family sent to Westminster among the representatives of Nationalist Ireland.

Not often is a family type so strongly marked as among the men of this stock. But the portraits show that while the late Major "Willie" Redmond closely resembled his father, in John Redmond and John Redmond's son there were reproduced the more dominant and massive features of the first of the parliamentary line.

To sum up then, John Redmond and his brother came of a long strain of Catholic gentry who were linked by continuous historic association of over seven centuries to a certain district in South Leinster, and who retained leadership among their own people. The tradition of military service was strong, too, in this family. Their father's cousin, son to the original John Edward Redmond, was a professional soldier; and their mother was the daughter of General Hoey. They were brought up in an old-fashioned country house, Ballytrent, on the Wexford coast, and the habits of outdoor country life and sport which furnished the chief pleasure of their lives were formed in boyhood. Their upbringing differed from that of boys in thousands of similar country houses throughout Ireland only in one circumstance; they were Catholics,

and even so lately as in their boyhood Catholic land-owners were comparatively few.

John Redmond was four years older than his younger brother, born in 1861. He got his schooling under the Jesuits at Clongowes in early days, before the system of Government endowment by examination results had given incentive to cramming. According to his own account he did little work and nobody pressed him to exertion. But the Jesuits are skilful teachers, and they left a mark on his mind. It is scarcely chance that the two speakers of all I have heard who had the best delivery were pupils of theirs—Redmond and Sir William Butler. They taught him to write, they taught him to speak and to declaim, they encouraged his natural love of literature. His taste was formed in those days and it was curiously old-fashioned. His diction in a prepared oration might have come from the days of Grattan: and he maintained the old-fashioned habit of quotation. No poetry written later than Byron, Moore and Shelley made much appeal to him, save the Irish political ballads. But scarcely any English speaker quoted Shakespeare in public so often or so aptly as this Irishman.

From Clongowes he went to Trinity College, Dublin, where he matriculated in October 1874 at the age of seventeen. His academic studies seem to have been half-hearted. At the end of a year his name was taken off the College books by his father, but was replaced. At the close of his second year of study, in July 1876, it was removed again and for good.

But apart from what he learnt at school, his real education was an apprenticeship; he was trained in the House of Commons for the work of Parliament. He was a boy of fifteen, of an age to be keenly interested, when the representation of Wexford passed from his great-uncle to his father. Probably the reason why he was removed from Trinity College was the desire of Mr. William Redmond to have his son with him in London. Certainly



John Redmond was there during the session of 1876, for on the introduction of Mr. Gladstone's second Home Rule Bill he recalled a finely apposite Shakespearean quotation which he had heard Butt use in a Home Rule debate of that year. In May 1880 his father procured him a clerkship in the House. The post to which he was assigned was that of attendant in the Vote Office, so that his days (and a great part of his nights) were spent in the two little rooms which open off the Members' Lobby, that buzzing centre of parliamentary gossip, activity and intrigue. Half a dozen steps only separated him from the door of the Chamber itself, and that door he was always privileged to pass and listen to the debates, standing by the entrance outside the magical strip of matting which indicates the bar of the House. From this point of vantage he watched the first stages of a Parliament in which Mr. Gladstone set out with so triumphant a majority—and watched too the inroads made upon the power and prestige of that majority by the new parliamentary force which had come into being.

Redmond himself described thus (in a lecture delivered at New York in 1896) the policy which came to be known as "The New Departure":

"Mr. Parnell found that the British Parliament insisted upon turning a deaf ear to Ireland's claim for justice. He resolved to adopt the simple yet masterly device of preventing Parliament doing any work at all until it consented to hear."

In the task of systematic and continuous obstruction Parnell at once found a ready helper, Mr. Joseph Biggar. But Parnell, Biggar and those who from 1876 to 1880 acted generally or frequently with them were only members of the body led by Butt; though they were, indeed, ultimately in more or less open revolt against Butt's leadership. When Butt died, and was at least nominally replaced by Mr. Shaw, the growth of Parnell's ascen-

dancy became more marked. In the general election of 1880 sixty Home Rulers were returned to Parliament; and at a meeting attended by over forty, twenty-three declared for Parnell as their leader. A question almost of ceremonial observance immediately defined the issue. Liberals were in power, and Government was more friendly to Ireland's claims than was the Opposition. Mr. Shaw and his adherents were for marking support of the Government by sitting on the Government side of the Chamber. Parnell insisted that the Irish party should be independent of all English attachments and permanently in opposition till Ireland received its rights. With that view he and his friends took up their station on the Speaker's left below the gangway, where they held it continuously for thirty-nine years.

Mr. William Redmond was no supporter of the new policy. As the little group which Parnell headed grew more and more insistent in their obstruction, the member for Wexford spoke less and less. His interventions were rare and dignified. In the debate on the Address in the new Parliament of 1880 he acted as a lieutenant to Mr. Shaw. Yet he was on very friendly terms with Parnell—almost a neighbour of his, for the Parnell property, lying about the Vale of Ovoca, touched the border of Wexford.

Mr. William Redmond's career in that Parliament was soon ended. In November 1880 he died, and, normally, his son, whose qualifications and ambitions were known, would have succeeded him. But collision between Government and the Parnellite party was already beginning. Mr. T. M. Healy, then Parnell's secretary, had been arrested for a speech in denunciation of some eviction proceedings. This was the first arrest of a prominent man under Mr. Forster's rule as Chief Secretary, and Parnell, with whom in those days the decision rested, decided that Mr. Healy should immediately be put forward for the vacant seat. In later days he was

to remind Mr. Healy how he had done this, "rebuking and restraining the prior right of my friend, Jack Redmond." Redmond had not long to wait, however. Another vacancy occurred in another Wexford seat, the ancient borough of New Ross, and he was returned without opposition at a crucial moment in the parliamentary struggle.

That struggle was not only parliamentary. From the famine year of 1879 onwards a fierce agitation had begun, whose purpose was to secure the land of Ireland to the people who worked it. Davitt was to the land what Parnell was to the parliamentary campaign: but it was Parnell's genius which fused the two movements.

To meet the growing power of the Land League, Mr. Forster demanded a Coercion Bill, and after long struggles in the Cabinet he prevailed. Against this Bill it was obvious that all means of parliamentary resistance would be used to the uttermost.

They were still of a primitive simplicity. In the days before Parnell the House of Commons had carried on its business under a system of rules which worked perfectly well because there was a general disposition in the assembly to get business done. A beginning of the new order was made when a group of ex-military men attempted to defeat the measure for abolishing purchase of commissions in the Army by a series of dilatory motions. This, however, was an isolated occurrence. Any English member who set himself to thwart the desire of the House for a conclusion by using means which the general body considered unfair would have been reduced to quiescence by a demonstration that he was considered a nuisance. His voice would have been drowned in a buzz of conversation or by less civil interruptions. This implied, however, a willingness to be influenced by social considerations, and, more than that, a loyalty to the traditions and purposes of the House. Parnell felt no such willingness and acknowledged no such loyalty.



"His object," said Redmond in the address already quoted, "was to injure it so long as it refused to listen to the just claims of his country." The House, realizing Parnell's intention, visited upon him and his associates all the penalties by which it was wont to enforce its wishes: but the penalties had no sting. All the displays of anger, disapproval, contempt, all the vocabulary of denunciation in debate and in the Press, all the studied forms of insult, all the marks of social displeasure, only served to convince the Irishmen that they were producing their effect. Still, the House continued to act on the assumption that it could vindicate its traditions in the old traditional way: it was determined to change none of the rules which had stood for so many generations: it would maintain its liberties and put down in its own way those who had the impertinence to abuse them. The breaking-point came exactly at the moment when Redmond was elected.

On Monday, Jan. 24th, 1881, Mr. Forster introduced his Coercion Bill. It was open, of course, to any member to speak once, and once only, on the main motion. But every member had an indefinite right to move the adjournment of the debate, and on each such motion every member could speak again. The debate was carried all through that week. It was resumed on Monday, 31st. The declaration of Redmond's election was fixed for Tuesday, February 1st, in New Ross—there being no contest. A telegram summoned him to come instantly after the declaration to London. He took the train at noon, travelled to Dublin and crossed the Channel. At Holyhead about midnight another telegram told him that the debate was still proceeding. He reached Euston on the Wednesday morning, drove straight to the House, and there, standing at the bar, saw what he thus described:

"It was thus, travel-stained and weary, that I first presented myself as a member of the British Parliament. The House was still sitting, it had been sitting without

a break for over forty hours, and I shall never forget the appearance the Chamber presented. The floor was littered with paper. A few dishevelled and weary Irishmen were on one side of the House, about a hundred infuriated Englishmen upon the other; some of them still in evening dress, and wearing what were once white shirts of the night before last. Mr. Parnell was upon his legs, with pale cheeks and drawn face, his hands clenched behind his back, facing without flinching a continuous roar of interruption. It was now about eight o'clock. Half of Mr. Parnell's followers were out of the Chamber snatching a few moments' sleep in chairs in the Library or Smoke Room. Those who remained had each a specified period of time allotted him to speak, and they were wearily waiting their turn. As they caught sight of me standing at the bar of the House of Commons there was a cheer of welcome. I was unable to come to their aid, however, as under the rules of the House I could not take my seat until the commencement of a new sitting. My very presence, however, brought, I think, a sense of encouragement and approaching relief to them; and I stood there at the bar with my travelling coat still upon me, gazing alternately with indignation and admiration at the amazing scene presented to my gaze.

"This, then, was the great Parliament of England! Of intelligent debate there was none. It was one unbroken scene of turbulence and disorder. The few Irishmen remained quiet, too much amused, perhaps, or too much exhausted to retaliate. It was the English—the members of the first assembly of gentlemen in Europe, as they love to style it—who howled and roared, and almost foamed at the mouth with rage at the calm and pale-featured young man who stood patiently facing them and endeavouring to make himself heard."

An hour later the closure was applied, for the first time in Parliament's history. The records of Hansard spoil a story which Redmond was fond of telling—that he took his oath and his seat, made his maiden speech and was suspended all in the same evening. In point of fact he took his seat that Wednesday afternoon, when the House sat for a few hours only and adjourned again.

Next day news came in that Davitt had been arrested in Ireland. Mr. Dillon, in the process of endeavouring to extract an explanation from the Government, was named and suspended. When the Prime Minister after this rose to speak, Mr. Parnell moved: "That Mr. Gladstone be not heard."

The Speaker, ruling that Mr. Gladstone was in possession of the House, refused to put the motion. Mr. Parnell, insisting that his motion should be put, came into collision with the authority of the Chair and was formally "named." Mr. Gladstone then moved his suspension and a division was called—whereupon, under the rules which then existed, all members were bound to leave the Chamber. On this occasion the Irish members remained seated, as a protest, and after the division the Speaker solemnly reported this breach of order to the House. For their refusal to obey the Irish members present were suspended from the service of the House, and as a body they refused to leave unless removed by physical force. Accordingly, man by man was ordered to leave and each in turn rose up with a brief phrase of refusal, after which the Sergeant-at-Arms with an officer approached and laid a hand on the recusant's shoulder. Redmond, when his turn came, said:

"As I regard the whole of these proceedings as unmitigated despotism, I beg respectfully to decline to withdraw."

That was his maiden speech. Having delivered it, "Mr. Redmond," says Hansard, "was by desire of Mr. Speaker removed by the Sergeant-at-Arms from the House." It was a strange beginning for one of the greatest parliamentarians of our epoch—and one of the greatest conservatives. The whole bent of his mind was towards moderation in all things. Temperamentally, he hated all forms of extravagant eccentricity; he loved the old if only because it was old; he had the keenest sense not only of decorum but of the essential dignity

which is the best guardian of order. Yet here he was committed to a policy which aimed deliberately at outraging all the established decencies—at disregarding ostentatiously all the usages by which an assembly of gentlemen had regulated their proceedings.

What is more, it was an assembly which Redmond found temperamentally congenial to him—an assembly which, apart from its relation to Ireland, he thoroughly admired and liked. In 1896, when Irish members were fiercely in opposition to the Government, he concluded his description of Parliament with these words :

“In the main, the House of Commons is, I believe, dominated by a rough-and-ready sense of manliness and fair-play. Of course, I am not speaking of it as a governing body. In that character it has been towards Ireland always ignorant and nearly always unfair. I am treating it simply as an assembly of men, and I say of it, it is a body where sooner or later every man finds his proper level, where mediocrity and insincerity will never permanently succeed, and where ability and honesty of purpose will never permanently fail.”

That was no mean tribute, coming from one who held himself aloof from all the personal advantages belonging to the society whose rules he did not recognize. The opinion to which the Irish members of Parnell's following were amenable was not made at Westminster ; it did not exist there—except, and that in its most rigid form, amongst themselves.

It is worth while to recall for English readers—and perhaps not for them only—what membership of Parnell's party involved. In the first place, there was a self-denying ordinance by which the man elected to it bound himself to accept no post of any kind under Government. All the chances which election to Parliament opens to most men—and especially to men of the legal profession—were at once set aside. Absolute discipline and unity of action, except in matters specially left open to individual



judgment, were enforced on all. These were the essentials. But in the period of acute war between the Irish and all other parties which was opening when Redmond entered there was a self-imposed rule that as the English public and English members disapproved and disliked the Irishmen an answering attitude should be adopted: that even private hospitality should be avoided and that the belligerents should behave as if they were quite literally in an enemy's country.

Later, when Mr. Gladstone had adopted the Irish cause and alliance with the Liberal party had begun, the rigour of this attitude was modified. Many Irish members joined the Liberal clubs and went freely to houses where they were sure of sympathy. Yet neither of the Redmonds followed far in this direction, and the habit of social isolation which they formed in their early days lasted with them to the end. If John Redmond ever went to any house in London which was not an Irish home it was by the rarest exception.

For society, Parnell's party depended on themselves and their countrymen and sympathizers. But they were in no way to be pitied; they were the best of company for one another. It was a movement of the young, it had all the strength and audacity of youth, it was a great adventure. A few men from an older generation came with them, Mr. Biggar, Justin McCarthy and others. But their leader, though older than most of his followers, was a young man by parliamentary standards. In 1880 Parnell was only thirty-three; and within four years more he was as great a power in the House as Mr. Gladstone. Some few years back I heard Willie Redmond say in the Members' smoking-room, "Isn't it strange to think that Parnell would be sixty now if he had lived. I can't imagine him as an old man." Yet the accent of maturity was on Parnell's leadership; the men whom he led were essentially young. In 1881, when Redmond entered Parliament, Mr. Dillon was thirty, Mr. T. P.

O'Connor and Mr. Sexton veterans of thirty-three, Mr. Healy twenty-six. Mr. William O'Brien (who did not come in until 1883) was of the same year as Mr. Dillon. Redmond was younger than any of them, being elected at the age of twenty-four. Yet nobody then thought it surprising that he should be sent in 1882 to represent the party on a mission to Australia and the United States at a most difficult time. The Phoenix Park murders had created widespread indiscriminating anger against all Irish Nationalists throughout the Empire, and Redmond found it difficult to secure even a hall to speak in. For support there was sent to him his brother, then a youth of twenty-one, and feeling ran so strong against the two that the Prime Minister of New South Wales (Sir Henry Parkes) proposed their expulsion from the colony. Nevertheless, Redmond made good. "The Irish workingmen stood by me," he said, "and in fact saved the situation." Fifteen thousand pounds were collected before they left the island continent.

It indicates well the changed conditions to remember that when in 1906 Mr. Hazleton and the late T. M. Kettle were selected to go on a far less arduous and difficult mission to America, there was much talk about the astonishing youth of our representatives. Yet both were then older than John Redmond was in 1882—to say nothing of his brother, who must have been the most exuberantly youthful spokesman that a serious cause ever found.

The Redmonds' stay in Australia, which lasted over a year, determined one important matter for both young men; they found their wives in the colony whose Prime Minister proposed to expel them. John Redmond married Miss Joanna Dalton and his brother her near kinswoman, Miss Eleanor Dalton. Willie Redmond was elected to Parliament in his absence for his father's old seat—Mr. Healy having vacated Wexford to fight and win a sensational election in county Monaghan.

This early visit to the great transmarine dominions, and the ties which he formed there, left a marked impression on John Redmond's mind, which was reinforced by other visits in later years, and by all the growing associations that linked him to life and politics in the dominions. Redmond knew vastly more, and in truth cared vastly more, about the British Empire than most Imperialists. His affection was not based on any inherited prejudice, nor inspired by a mere geographical idea. He was attracted to that which he had seen and handled, in whose making he had watched so many of his fellow-countrymen fruitfully and honourably busy. He felt acutely that the Empire belonged to Irish Nationalists at least as much as to English Tories. America also was familiar to him, and he had every cause to be grateful to the United States; but his interest in the dominions was of a different kind. He felt himself a partner in their glories, and by this feeling he was linked in sympathy to a great many elements in British life that were otherwise uncongenial to him—and was, on the other hand, divided in sympathy from some who in Irish politics were his staunch supporters. He could never understand the psychology of the Little Englander. "If I were an Englishman," he once said to me, "I should be the greatest Imperialist living." From first to last his attitude was that which is indicated by a passage of his speech on Mr. Gladstone's first Home Rule Bill:

"As a Nationalist, I may say I do not regard as entirely palatable the idea that for ever and a day Ireland's voice should be excluded from the councils of an Empire which the genius and valour of her sons have done so much to build up and of which she is to remain a part."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This speech is included in "Home Rule: Speeches of John Redmond, M.P.," a volume edited in 1910 by Mr. Barry O'Brien. It contains also the American addresses quoted in this chapter, and a speech to the Dublin Convention in 1907, quoted in the next.

## II

To follow in detail Redmond's career under Parnell's leadership would be beyond the scope of this book. Less conspicuous in Parliament than such lieutenants of "the Chief" as Mr. Sexton, Mr. Dillon and Mr. Healy, John Redmond acted as one of the party whips and was in much demand outside Parliament as a platform speaker. In August 1886 he was once more sent overseas to attend the Convention of the Irish Race at Chicago. He had to tell his hearers of victory and of repulse.

"When you last assembled in Convention, two years ago, the Irish party in Parliament did not number more than forty; to-day we hold five-sixths of the Irish seats, and speak in the name of five-sixths of the Irish people in Ireland. Two years ago we had arrayed against us all English political parties and every English statesman; to-day we have on our side one of the great English political parties, which, though its past traditions in Ireland have been evil, still represents the party of progress in England, and the greatest statesman of the day, who has staked his all upon winning for Ireland her national rights. Two years ago England had in truth, in Mitchel's phrase, the ear of the world. To-day, at last, that ear, so long poisoned with calumnies of our people, is now open to the voice of Ireland. Two years ago the public opinion of the world—aye, and even of this free land of America—was doubtful as to the justice of our movement; to-day the opinion of the civilized world, and of America in particular, is clearly and distinctly on our side."

On the other hand, in England the forces of reaction had succeeded. The Home Rule Bill had been defeated and the Liberal party broken up. A Government was in power whose programme was one of coercion. But Ireland, Redmond said, was ready for the fight and confident that with the weapons at command the enemy could be defeated.



Who were the enemy, and what the weapon? His speech made this plain.

“Once more Irish landlords have behaved themselves with unaccountable folly and stupidity. They have once more stood between Ireland and her freedom, and have refused even an extravagant price for the land because the offer was coupled with the concession of an Irish Parliament. So be it. I believe the last offer has been made to Irish landlordism. The ultimate settlement of this question must now be reserved for the Parliament of Ireland, and meantime the people must take care to protect themselves and their children. In many parts of Ireland, I assert, rent is to-day an impossibility, and in every part of Ireland the rents demanded are exorbitant, and will not, and cannot, be paid.”

He was wrong. The settlement of this vast question was to be accomplished through the Imperial Parliament, not the Irish. Yet it was accomplished in essence by an agreement between Irishmen for which Redmond himself was largely responsible.

That settlement, however, merely ratified in 1903 the final stage in the conversion of both countries to Parnell's policy of State-aided land purchase. Tentative beginnings were made with it under the Government which was in power from 1886 to 1892; but the main characteristic of this period was a fierce revival of the land war. It was virulent in Wexford, and in 1888 Redmond shared the experience which few Irish members escaped or desired to escape; he was sentenced to imprisonment on a charge of intimidation for a speech condemning some evictions. He and his brother met in Wexford jail, and both used to describe with glee their mutual salutation: “Good heavens, what a ruffian you look!” Cropped hair and convict clothes were part of Mr. Balfour's resolute government.

Yet in those days Ireland was winning, and winning fast. Mr. Gladstone's personal ascendancy, never stronger

than in the wonderful effort of his old age, asserted itself more and more. Public sympathy in Great Britain was turning against the wholesale evictions, the knocking down of peasants' houses by police and military with battering-rams. The Tory party sought for a new political weapon, and one day *The Times* came out with the facsimile of what purported to be a letter in Parnell's hand. This document implied at least condonation of the Phoenix Park murders.

Other letters equally incriminating were published. Parnell denied the authorship, his denial was not accepted ; fierce controversy ended in the establishment of one of the strangest Commissions of Enquiry ever set up—a semi-judicial tribunal of judges. Its proceedings created the acutest public interest, drawn out over long months, up to the day when Sir Charles Russell had before him in the witness-box the original vendor of the letters—one Pigott. Pigott's collapse, confession of forgery, flight and suicide, followed with appalling swiftness : and the result was to generate through England a very strong sympathy for the man against whom, and against whose followers, such desperate calumnies had been uttered and exploited. Parnell's prestige was no longer confined to his own countrymen : and the sense of all Home Rulers was that they fought a winning battle, under two allied leaders of extraordinary personal gifts.

Then, as soon as it was clear that the attack of the Pigott letters had recoiled on those who launched it, came the indication of a fresh menace. Proceedings for divorce were taken with Parnell as the co-respondent : the case was undefended. Mr. Gladstone and probably most Englishmen expected that Parnell would retire, at all events temporarily, from public life, as, in Lord Morley's words, "any English politician of his rank" would have been obliged to do. Parnell refused to retire ; and Gladstone made it publicly known that if Parnell continued to lead the Irish party, his own leader-

ship of the Liberal party, "based, as it had been, mainly on the prosecution of the Irish cause," would be rendered "almost a nullity." The choice—for it was a choice—was left to the Irish. To retain Parnell as leader in Gladstone's judgment made Gladstone's task impossible, and therefore indicated Gladstone's withdrawal from public life. To part with Parnell meant parting with the ablest leader that Nationalist Ireland had ever found.

A more heartrending alternative has never been imposed on any body of politicians, and John Redmond, unlike his younger brother, was not of those to whom decision came by an instinctive act of allegiance. His nature forced him to see both sides, but when he decided it was with his whole nature. The issue was debated by the Irish party in Committee Room 15 of the House of Commons, with the Press in attendance. In this encounter Redmond for the first time stepped to the front. He had hitherto been outside the first flight of Irish parliamentarians. Now, he was the first to state the case for maintaining Parnell's leadership, and throughout the discussions he led on that side. When Parnell's death came a few months after the "split" declared itself, there was no hesitation as to which of the Parnellites should assume the leadership of their party. Redmond resigned his seat in North Wexford and contested Cork city, where Parnell had long been member. He was badly beaten, and for some three months the new leader of the Parnellites was without a seat in the House—though not during a session. Another death made a new opening, and in December 1891 his fight at Waterford against no less a man than Michael Davitt turned for a moment the electoral tide which was setting heavily against the smaller group. It was a notable win, and the hero of that triumph retained his hold on the loyalty of those with whom he won it when the rest of Ireland had turned away from him. The tie lasted to his death—and after it, for Waterford then chose as

its representative the dead leader's son, and renewed that choice in the general election of 1918, when other allegiances to the old party were like leaves on the wind.

Other ties were formed in these years, which lasted through Redmond's life. I have deliberately abstained from entering into either the merits or the details of the "split." But certain of its aspects must be recognized. In the division into Parnellites and Anti-Parnellites, Parnellites were a small but fierce minority. It needed resolution for a man to be a Parnellite, all the more because the whole force of the Catholic Church was thrown against them, and in some instances disgraceful methods were used. One of Redmond's best friends was the owner of a local newspaper; it was declared to be a mortal sin to buy, sell, or read his journal. The business was reduced to the verge of ruin but the man went on, till a new bishop came and gradually things mended. He, like Redmond, was a staunch practising Catholic, and later on was the friend and trusted associate of many priests; but he stood for an element in Ireland which refused to allow the least usurpation by ecclesiastical authority in the sphere of citizenship.

Willie Redmond won East Clare, as his brother won Waterford city, after a turbulent election with the priests against him. He gave in that contest, as always, at least as good as he got; but his collision with individuals never affected his devotion or his brother's to their Church.

But in social life the estrangements of these days were far-reaching, and, at least negatively, so far as Redmond was concerned, they were lasting. His existence had been saddened and altered shortly before the break up by the death of his first wife, which left him a young widower with three children. After the "split" the whole circle of friends among whom he had lived in Dublin and in London was shattered and divided; and in



later life none, I think, of those broken intimacies was renewed.

In Redmond's nature there was a total lack of rancour. Clear-sighted as he was, he realized how desperately difficult a choice was imposed on Nationalists by Parnell's situation, and he knew how honestly men had differed. He could command completely his intellectual judgment of their action, and there were many whom in later stages of the movement he trusted none the less for their divergence from him at this crisis. But he was more than commonly a creature of instinct; and the associations of his intimate life were all decided in these years. His affection was given to those who were comrades in this pass of danger. The only two exceptions to be made are, first and chiefly, Mr. Devlin, who was too young to be actively concerned with politics at the time of Parnell's overthrow; and, to speak truth, it is not possible to be so closely associated as Redmond was with this lieutenant of his, or to be so long and loyally served by him, and not to undergo his personal attraction. The other exception is Mr. J. J. Mooney, who entered Parliament and politics later than the "split," but whose personal allegiance to Mr. Redmond was always declared. He acted for long as Redmond's secretary and always as his counsellor—for in all the detail of parliamentary business, especially on the side of private bill legislation, the House had few more capable members. He was perhaps more completely than Mr. Devlin one of the little group of intimates with whom Redmond loved to surround himself in the country. All the rest were old champions of the fight over Parnell's body; but by far the closest friend of all was his brother Willie. Their marriages to kinswomen had redoubled the tie of blood.

It should be noted here that Redmond married for the second time in 1899, after ten years of widowerhood. His wife was, by his wish and her own, never at all in

the public eye. All that should be said here is that his friends found friendship with him easier and not more difficult than before this marriage, and were grateful for the devoted care which was bestowed upon their leader. She accompanied him on all his political journeyings, whatever their duration, and gave him in the fullest measure the companionship which he desired.

## CHAPTER II

### REDMOND AS CHAIRMAN

#### I

THE Parliament of 1892-5 was barren of results for Ireland, being consumed by factious strife, at Westminster between the Houses and in Ireland between the parties. With Gladstone's retirement it seemed as if Home Rule were dead. But thinking men realized that the Irish question was still there to be dealt with, and approach to solution began along new lines. When Lord Salisbury returned to power in 1895, Land Purchase was cautiously extended with much success: the Congested Districts Board, originally established by Mr. Arthur Balfour, was showing good results, and his brother Mr. Gerald Balfour, now Chief Secretary, felt his way towards a policy which came to be described as "killing Home Rule with kindness." A section of Irish Nationalist opinion was scared by the menace contained in this epigram; and consequently, when in 1895 Mr. Horace Plunkett (as he then was) put forward proposals for a conference of Irishmen to consider possible means for developing Irish agriculture and Irish industries under the existing system, voices were raised against what was denounced as a new attempt to divert Nationalist Ireland from its main purpose of achieving self-government. Mr. Plunkett's original proposal was that a body of four Anti-Parnellites, two Parnellites and two Unionists should meet and deliberate in Ireland, during the recess. In the upshot the Nationalist majority refused to take any part; but Redmond, with one of his supporters,

Mr. William Field, served on the "Recess Committee" and concurred in its Report, out of which came the creation of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction.

In 1896 the Commission on Financial Relations, which had been set up by the Liberal Ministry in 1894, reported, and its findings produced a state of feeling which for a moment promised co-operation between divided interests in Ireland. Unionist magnates joined with Nationalists in denouncing the system of taxation, which the Commission—by a majority of eleven to two—had described as oppressive and unjust to the weaker country.

Redmond was one of the members of this Commission, which included also distinguished representatives of his Nationalist opponents—Mr. Blake and Mr. Sexton; and he no doubt cherished hopes arising from the resolute demands for redress uttered by Lord Castletown and other Irish Unionist Peers. Those hopes were soon dispelled; nothing but much controversy came of the demand for improved financial relations. Mr. Gerald Balfour's schemes were more tangible, and in 1897 Redmond announced that the Government's proposal to introduce a measure of Local Government for Ireland should have his support. The Bill, when it came, exceeded expectation in its scope, and Redmond gave it a cordial welcome in the name of the Parnellites. The larger group, however, then led by Mr. Dillon, declined to be responsible for accepting it.

Later, in the working of this measure, Redmond pressed strongly that elections under it should not be conducted on party lines and that the landlord class should be brought into local administrative work. His advice unfortunately was not taken.

Then followed the South African struggle, and in giving voice to a common sentiment against what Nationalist Ireland held to be an unjust war the two Irish parties found themselves united and telling together



in the lobby. Formal union followed. By this time the cleavage between Parnellite and Anti-Parnellite was less acute than that between Mr. Healy's section and the followers of Mr. Dillon and Mr. O'Brien. The choice of Redmond as Chairman was due less to a sense of his general fitness than to despair of reaching a decision between the claims of the other three outstanding men.

The sacrifice to be made was made at Mr. Dillon's expense, and he did not acquiesce willingly or cordially. The cordiality which ultimately marked his relations with Redmond was of later growth—fostered by the necessity which Mr. Dillon found imposed on him of defending loyally the party's leader against attacks from the men who had been most active in selecting him.

A part of the compact under which Redmond was elected to the chair limited the power of the newly chosen. He was to be Chairman, not leader; that is to say, he was not to act except after consultation with the party as a whole: he was not to commit them upon policy. This meant in practice that he acted as head of a cabinet, which from 1906 onwards consisted of Mr. Dillon, Mr. Devlin and Mr. T. P. O'Connor—the last representing not only a great personal parliamentary experience and ability, but also the powerful and zealous organization of Irish in Great Britain. Redmond adhered scrupulously to the spirit of this compact. There was only one instance in which he took action without consultation. But that instance was the most important of all—his speech at the outbreak of the war.

Another thing which governed his conduct in the chair of the party, as indeed it governed that of nearly all the rank and file, was his horror of the years which Ireland had gone through since Parnell's fall. He loathed faction and he had struggled through murky whirlpools of it; for the rest of his life he was determined, almost at any cost, to maintain the greatest possible degree of unity among Irish Nationalists. Yet in the end he

unhesitatingly made a choice and took an action which risked dividing, and in the last event actually divided, Nationalist Ireland as it had never been divided before. There were things for which he would face even that supreme peril. Deep in his heart there was a vision which compelled him. It was the vision of Ireland united as a whole.

All this, however, lay far in the future when he was elected to the chair; for the moment his task was to reunite Irish Nationalists, and it began prosperously. From the first his position was one of growing strength. Irishmen all the world over were heartsick of faction and rejoiced in even the name of unity. Redmond made it a reality. While leading the little Parnellite party, reduced at last to nine, his line of action was comparable to that pursued by Mr. William O'Brien from 1910 onwards. It had, to put things mildly, not been calculated to assist the leader of the main Nationalist body. In 1904, Justin McCarthy, then retired from politics, wrote in his book on *British Political Parties*: "Parnell's chief lieutenant had shown in the service of his chief an energy and passion which few of us expected of him, and was utterly unsparing in his denunciations of the men who maintained the other side of the controversy. From this it was not unnatural to expect difficulties occasioned both by the leader's temper and by the temper of those whom he led. But men who had been adverse assured me that they had changed their opinions and were glad to find they could work with Redmond in perfect harmony and that his manners and bearing showed no signs whatever of any bitter memories belonging to the days of internal dispute."

In truth, the man's nature was kindly and tolerant; courtesy came more natural to him than invective. Above all, he was sensitive for the reputation of his country in the eyes of the world, and the spectacle of Irishmen heaping vilifications on each other always filled

him with distaste. Whether the taunts passed between Nationalist and Unionist or Nationalist and Nationalist made little difference to his feeling. With him it was no empty phrase that he regarded all Irishmen in equal degree as his fellow-countrymen.

In 1902 he was once more a party to a continued effort made by Irishmen outside of party lines to solve a part of the national difficulty. The policy of land purchase had proved its immense superiority over that of dual ownership and had even been introduced on a considerable scale. But its very success led to trouble, because on one side of a boundary fence there would be farmers who had purchased and whose annual instalments of purchase money were lower than the rents paid by their neighbours on the other side of the mearing. Renewed struggle against rent led to new eviction scenes on the grand scale ; and by this time landlord opinion was half converted to the purchase policy, as a necessary solution. The persistency of one young Galway man, Captain John Shawe Taylor, brought about the famous Land Conference of 1902, in which Mr. O'Brien, Mr. Healy, Mr. Redmond and Mr. T. W. Russell on behalf of the tenants met Lord Dunraven, Lord Mayo, Colonel Hutcheson Poe and Colonel Nugent Everard representing (though not officially) the landlord interest : and the result of the agreement reached by this body was seen in Mr. Wyndham's Land Purchase Act of 1903. This great and drastic measure altered fundamentally the character of the Irish problem. Directly by its own effect, and indirectly by the example of new methods, it changed opinion alike in Ireland and Great Britain. In Ireland hitherto, as has been already seen, resistance to Home Rule had come primarily from the landlord class, by whom the Nationalist desire for self-government was construed as a cloak for the wish to revive or reverse the ancient confiscations. Now, the land question was by general consent settled, at least in principle ; in propor-

tion as landlords were bought out the leading economic argument against Home Rule disappeared. The opposition reduced itself strictly to political grounds; and it began to be plain that the true heart of resistance lay in Ulster.

Also, lines of cleavage in the Unionist camp began to appear. Already, landlords in the South and West had found a common ground of action with representatives of the tenants. It was felt, alike in Ireland and England, that this precedent might be developed further.

In England political opinion was much affected by the apparent success of an attempt to deal with the Irish problem piecemeal. The Congested Districts Board had done much to relieve those regions where famine was always a possibility; Local Government had given satisfactory results; and now Land Purchase was hailed as the beginning of a new era. The idea of seeing how much farther the principle of tentative approach could be carried took strong hold of many minds, and the word "devolution" came into fashion.

When it became known that Sir Antony MacDonnell, then Under-Secretary at Dublin Castle, had, in consultation with Lord Dunraven, drafted a scheme for transferring parts of Irish administration to a purely Irish authority, a situation rapidly defined itself in which Ulster broke away from the more liberal elements in Irish Unionism. The Ulster group demanded and obtained the resignation of Mr. George Wyndham; they demanded also the dismissal of the Under-Secretary. But Sir Antony MacDonnell was not of a resigning temper; he had not acted without authority, and he was defended zealously by the Irish members. The section of Liberal opinion which adhered rather to Lord Rosebery than to Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman probably drew the conclusion that the Irish party were prepared at least to tolerate the policy of approaching Home Rule step by step; and beyond doubt they were impressed by the prestige of



Sir Antony MacDonnell's record and personality. The son of a small Irish Catholic landlord, educated at the Galway College of the Queen's University, he had entered the Indian Civil Service and in it risen to the highest point of power. The recommendation that he should be brought home to assist in the Government of Ireland had come from Lord Lansdowne, then Governor-General of India, who knew that the famous administrator of the Punjab was a Catholic Irishman of Nationalist sympathies. He had been accepted by Mr. Wyndham, his official chief, "rather as a colleague than as a subordinate." Officially and publicly, the credit for the Land Act of 1903 went to the Chief Secretary, and Mr. Wyndham deserves much of it. But no one who knew the two men could have doubted that in the shaping of a measure involving so wide a range of detail, the leading part must have been taken by the Irish Civil Servant who in India had acquired most of his fame from a sweeping measure of land reform.

Proposals to alter the method and conduct of Irish administration before touching the parliamentary power to legislate and to tax came with extraordinary weight in coming from such a man; and the history of the previous Home Rule Bills was not encouraging to anyone, especially to those who had been members of Mr. Gladstone's two last administrations. From the time of the Parnell divorce case onwards, the Irish question had brought to Liberals nothing but embarrassment and embitterment. The enthusiasm for Home Rule which grew steadily from 1886 up to the severance between Gladstone and Parnell had vanished in the squalid controversies of the "split." Moreover, now, by the action of Mr. Chamberlain, a new dividing line had been brought into British politics. The cry of Protection seemed in the opinion of all Liberals to menace ruin to British prosperity; the banner of Free Trade offered a splendid rallying-point for a party which had known fifteen years

of dissension and division. Prudent men thought it would be unsafe, unwise and unpatriotic to compromise this great national interest by retaining the old watchword on which Gladstone had twice fought and twice been beaten.

It was clear, too, that a Home Rule Bill would provoke a direct conflict with the House of Lords and would raise that great struggle on not the most favourable issue. Statesmen like Sir Edward Grey and Mr. Asquith probably believed that a partial measure, an instalment of self-government, to which some influential sections of the Tory party would not be unfriendly, might have strong hopes of passing into law.

So it came to pass that in the election of 1906 the Liberal Party came into power with a majority of unexampled magnitude, but with a Government pledged, negatively, not to introduce a Home Rule Bill in that Parliament, but, positively, to attempt an Irish settlement by the policy of instalments.

In all this lay the seeds of trouble for the Irish leader. Liberals have never understood that Ireland will not take from them what it would take from the Tories. It will accept, as a palliative, from the party opposed to Home Rule what it will not accept from those who have admitted the justice of the national demand.

## II

"For myself," said Redmond in his speech to the Irish Convention in May 1907, "I have always expressed in public and in private my opinion that no half-way house on this question is possible; but at the same time I am, or at any rate I try to be, a practical politician. In the lodgment this idea of instalments had got in the minds of English statesmen I recognized the fact—and after all in politics the first essential is to recognize

facts—I recognized the fact that in this Parliament we were not going to get a pure Home Rule Bill offered, and I consented, and I was absolutely right in consenting, that whatever scheme short of that was put forward would be considered calmly on its merits.”

This meant that during the whole of the year 1906 and a part of 1907 the proposal of the new Irish Bill was under discussion with the Irish leaders. The course of these deliberations was undoubtedly a disappointment. Mr. Bryce was replaced by Mr. Birrell as Chief Secretary, but the scheme still fell short of what Redmond had hoped to attain. Unfortunately, and it was a characteristic error, his sanguine temperament had led him to encourage in Ireland hopes as high as his own. The production of the Irish Council Bill and its reception in Ireland was the first real shock to his power.

Mr. Birrell in introducing the measure spoke with his eye on the Tories and the House of Lords. He represented it as only the most trifling concession ; he emphasized not the powers which it conveyed but the limitations to them. Redmond in following him was in a difficult position. He stressed the point that to accept a scheme which by reason of its partial nature would break down in its working would be ruinous, because failure would be attributed to natural incapacity in the Irish people. Acceptance, therefore, he said, could not be unconditional ; and undoubtedly to his mind it was conditioned by his hope of securing certain important amendments, which he outlined. None the less, the tone of his speech was one of acceptance, and he concluded :

“ I have never in all the long years that I have been in this House spoken under such a heavy sense of responsibility as I am speaking on this measure this afternoon. Ever since Mr. Gladstone’s Bill of 1886 Ireland has been waiting for some scheme to settle the problem—waiting sometimes in hope, sometimes almost in despair ; but the horrible thing is this, that all the time that Ireland

has been so waiting there has been a gaping wound in her side, and her sons have had to stand by helpless while they saw her very life-blood flowing out. Who can say that is an exaggeration? Twenty years of resolute government by the party above the gangway have diminished the population of Ireland by a million. No man in any position of influence can take upon himself the awful responsibility of despising and putting upon one side any device that may arrest that hemorrhage, even although he believed, as I do, that far different remedies must be applied before Ireland can stand upon her feet in vigorous strength. We are determined, as far as we are concerned, that these other remedies shall be applied; but in the meantime we should shrink from the responsibility of rejecting anything which, after that full consideration which the Bill will receive, seems to our deliberate judgment calculated to relieve the sufferings of Ireland and hasten the day of her full national convalescence."

There is no doubt that the element in him which urged him to welcome anything that could set Irishmen working together on Irish problems made it almost impossible for him to throw aside this chance. It was clear to me also that by long months of work in secret deliberation the proposals originally set out had been greatly altered, so much so that in surveying the Bill he was conscious mainly of the improvements in it; and that in this process his mind had lost perception of how the measure was likely to affect Irish opinion—especially in view of his own hopeful prognostications. At all events, the reception of Mr. Birrell's speech, even by Redmond's own colleagues, marked a sudden change in the atmosphere. Some desired to vote at once against the measure; many were with difficulty brought into the lobby to support even the formal stage of first reading. In Ireland there was fierce denunciation. A Convention was called for May 21st. The crowd was so great that many of us could not make our way into the Mansion House; and Redmond opened the proceedings by moving



the rejection of the Bill. In the interval since the debate he had been confronted with a definite refusal to concede the amendments for which he asked.

These were mainly two, of principle : for the objection taken to the finance of the Bill was a detail, though of the first importance. The Bill proposed to hand over the five great departments of Irish administration to the control of an Irish Council. The decisions of that Council were to be subject to the veto of the Lord-Lieutenant, as are the decisions of Parliament to the veto of the Crown. But the Bill proposed not merely to give to the Viceroy the power of vetoing proposed action but of instituting other action on his own initiative. Secondly, the Council was to exercise its control through Committees, each of which was to have a paid chairman, nominated by the Crown.

"It would be far better," Redmond had said in the House of Commons, "to have one man selected as the chairmen of these committees are to be selected, to have charge, so far as the Council is concerned, of the working of the Department, and then all these chairmen acting together could form a sort of organic body which would give cohesion, would co-ordinate and give stability to the whole of the work. I am afraid that the Government seem to have shrunk from that for fear the argument would be used against them that they were really creating a Ministry."

That was the real difficulty. A Council subject only to a veto on its acts, even though it could neither pass a by-law nor strike a rate, would undoubtedly be said by the Unionist opposition to be a rudimentary parliament. A group of chairmen possessing administrative powers like those of Ministers would be labelled a Ministry ; and the Liberals who had pledged themselves not to give effect to their Home Rule principles were sensitive to charges of breach of faith.

It is a curious fact in politics that the public promise

conveyed in the adoption of certain principles is generally taken to be on the level of ordinary commercial obligation. Failure to keep it jeopardizes a man's reputation for political stability, just as failure to pay a tailor's bill imperils a man's financial character. But a promise to political opponents that you will not give effect to your principles stands on the level of a card debt: it is a matter of honour to make good; and on this point Mr. Asquith in particular has always shown an adamant resolution.

From 1907 onwards it was with Mr. Asquith that Redmond had chiefly to count. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, who, personally, had given no such limiting pledges, and who during his two years of leadership commanded a respect, an affectionate allegiance, from his followers in the House without parallel at all events since Mr. Gladstone's day, was fast weakening in health. He lived long enough to give freedom to South Africa, the one outstanding achievement of that Parliament; and by the success of that great measure he did more to remove British distrust of Home Rule than even Gladstone ever accomplished. It was no fault of his if Liberalism failed to settle the Irish question at the moment when Liberal power reached its highest point.

The failure of the Council Bill had one good result, and one only. It cleared the way for a definite propaganda on Home Rule. But before this could be undertaken it was necessary to pull Nationalist Ireland together, for it was once more rent with division and distrust. Mr. Healy, who in 1901 had been expelled from the Irish party and its organization on the motion of Mr. O'Brien and against Redmond's advice, and Mr. O'Brien, who had subsequently retired from the party against Redmond's wish, were both of them formidable antagonists; and each was vehement in attack on the main body of Nationalists and their leader. It was some time before Redmond braced himself to the struggle; but from the

opening of the autumn recess in 1907 he undertook a campaign throughout Ireland which it would be difficult to overpraise. In a series of speeches at chosen centres, delivered before great audiences, he laid down once more the national demand as he conceived it; and in each speech he dealt with a different aspect of the case for Home Rule.

A formal outcome of this campaign was the re-establishment of national unity. Mr. O'Brien and Mr. Healy returned to the Irish party for a brief period. But the more important result was the re-establishment of Redmond's personal position. He had made an effort which would have been great for any man, but for him was a victory over his own temperament. That temperament had in it, negatively, a great lack of personal ambition and, positively, a strong love for a quiet life. He did his work in Parliament regularly and conscientiously, always there day in and day out; and it was work of a very exacting kind. This had become the routine of his existence and he did it without strain. But to go outside it was for him always an effort. He hated town life; but more than this, he hated ceremonies, presentations, receptions in hotels, and all the promiscuous contact of political gatherings. Nevertheless, when he came to such an occasion no living man acquitted himself better. Apart from his oratory, he had an admirable manner, a dignified yet friendly courtesy which gained attachment. In the course of the autumn and winter following the Irish Council Bill he must have met and been seen by a hundred times more of his adherents than in any similar period of his leadership. People all over Ireland heard him not only on the public platform but in small addresses to deputations, in impromptu speeches at semi-public dinners, and all of this strengthened him where an Irish leader most needs to be strengthened—in the hearts of the people. The hold which he gained then stood to him during the years which

followed and up to the outbreak of the war. But it could have been still further strengthened, and if ambition had been a motive force in him, he would have strengthened it. More than that, if he had realized his full value to Ireland, he would have felt it his duty to do so. Modesty, combined with a certain degree of indolence, made him leave all that contact with the mass of his followers which is necessary to leadership to be effected through his chief colleagues, Mr. Dillon and Mr. Devlin—who, through no will of theirs, became rather joint leaders than lieutenants, so far as Ireland was concerned.

Circumstances helped to emphasize this tendency. His work lay very greatly in London. Parliament occupied every year a longer and longer space. The task of platform advocacy all over England was urgent, and in England Redmond stood out alone. It was little to be wondered at that when each long deferred recess came he made it a vacation and not a change of work. The seclusion from direct intercourse with the mass of his followers which conditions imposed upon him was further accentuated by his personal tastes and his choice of a dwelling.

In the early years of the nineteenth century the mountain range which runs along the east coast from outside Dublin through Wicklow into county Wexford was a country difficult of access and unsubdued. Here in 1803 Emmet found a refuge, and after Emmet's death here Michael Dwyer still held out: Connemara itself was hardly wilder or less accessible, till the "military road" was run, little more than a hundred years ago, from Dublin over the western slopes of Featherbed, past Glencree, and through Callary Bog, skirting Glendalough and traversing the wild recesses of Glenmalure, so that it cuts across the headwaters of those beautiful streams which meet in the Vale of Ovoca. From Glenmalure the road climbs a steep ridge and then travels in wide



downward curves across the seaward side of Lugnaquilla—fifth in height among Irish mountains. Here, at the head of a long valley which runs down to the Meeting of the Waters, was built one of the barracks which billeted the original garrison of the road. Later, these buildings had been used for constabulary; but with peaceful times this grew needless, for there was little disturbance among these Wicklow folk, tenants of little farms, each with a sheep-run on the vast hills. Nothing could be less like the flat sea-bordering lands of the Barony of Forth in which the Redmonds spent their boyhood than these wild, sweeping, torrent-seamed folds of hill and valley; but the place came to him as part of his inheritance from “the Chief.” Parnell’s home at Avondale was some ten miles from here, lying in woods beside the Ovoca River; but the Parnell property stretched up to the slopes of Lugnaquilla, and the dismantled barrack was used by him as a shooting lodge. Here, in the early days before his life became absorbed in the masterful attachment which led finally to his overthrow, he spent good hours; and here the two Redmonds and those others of his followers who were his companions came to camp roughly in this strange, gaunt survival of military rule. After Parnell’s death Redmond bought the barrack and a small plot of land about it, and it became increasingly and exclusively his home in Ireland. It was, indeed, Ireland itself for him. In it and through it he knew Ireland intimately, felt Ireland intensely and intensively, not only as a place, but as a way of being. Ireland to him meant Aughavanagh.

Partly, no doubt, the almost unbroken wildness of his surroundings appealed to an element of romance in his character, which was strongly emotional though extremely reticent. Only an artist would have recognized beauty in those scenes, for in all Ireland it would be difficult to find a landscape with less amenity; the

hill shapes are featureless, without boldness or intricacy of line. Redmond, a born artist in words, possessing strongly the sense of form, was sensitive to beauty in all kinds—yet rather to the beauty that is symmetrical, graceful and well-planned. A sailor does not love the sea for its beauty, and Redmond loved Ireland as a sailor loves the sea—yet with a difference. Ireland to him in a great measure was Aughavanagh, and Aughavanagh was a place of rest. Ireland is a good country to rest in. But it would have been far better for Redmond and for Ireland if Ireland had been the place not of his rest, but of his work.

His work was essentially that of an agent of Ireland carrying on Ireland's affairs in a strange capital. He spent more of his time in London than in Ireland, but he was never part of the life of London, never in any sense a Londoner. He was part of the life of the House of Commons, for that was his place of work; and when he left it he went to Aughavanagh as a man returns from the City to his home. This home of his was in no sense connected with his active occupations. He was no lover of gardening or of farming; he had none of the Irishman's taste for the overseeing of stock or land; he enjoyed shooting, but he was not a passionate sportsman. What was a passion with him—for he sacrificed much to it—was rest in the place of his choice.

It was not a lonely habitation. He was no recluse, and when there he was always surrounded by his friends. I do not know precisely how one could constitute a list of them—but half a dozen men at least came and went there as they chose. Mr. Mooney, Mr. Hayden, "Long John" O'Connor, Dr. Kenny—these, and above all, Paddy O'Brien, the party's chief acting whip—were constant there. Some came to shoot, and Willie Redmond used to come over from his house at Delgany, where the Glen of the Downs debouches seaward; walking generally, for he was the fastest and most untiring of mountaineers:



very few cared to keep beside him on the hills. Others were content to share the daily bathes, morning and afternoon, in a long deep pool where the little stream tumbling down a series of cascades makes a place to dive and swim in. These were the friends of Redmond's own generation, and they were also his son's friends; but the two daughters had their allies, and one way or another the party was apt to be a big one—very simply provided for. When I went there first (in 1907) you climbed a narrow stone stair to the first floor; on the left was a dining-room, beyond that a billiard-room; on the right, Redmond's study, and beyond that his bedroom. Another flight took you to the upper regions, where were two dormitories—the girls to the right, the men to the left. Later, he made some alterations, and the upstairs rooms were subdivided off; the garden was developed; it became more of a house and less of a barrack; but the character of the life did not change. It was most simple, most hospitable, most unconventional and most remote.

Certainly a great part of Aughavanagh's charm for him lay in its remoteness. It was seven Irish miles up a hilly road from the nearest railway station, post office or telegraph station. Aughrim was three hours' train journey from Dublin, on a tiny branch line, and trains were few. Until motors brought him (to his intense resentment) within reach, he was as inaccessible as if he had lived in Clare or Mayo.

So it came to pass that though he knew to the very core one typical district of Ireland, and was far more closely in touch with a few score of Irish peasants through their daily life than any of his leading associates, he was yet cut off by his own choice from much that is Ireland—and perhaps from much that was most important to him. Political opinion is created in the towns, and he knew the Irish townfolk, so far as he could manage it, only through his correspondence, and through those

business visits to Dublin which he made as few as possible.

If his work had lain, where it should by rights have lain, in a ministerial office in Dublin, all would have been well. As it was, the deliberate and extreme seclusion of his life in Ireland weakened his influence. He was far too shrewd not to know this, and far too unambitious to care. Work he never shrank from. But the daily solicitations of people with personal grievances to lay before him, personal interests which they desired him to promote, made a form of trouble which in his periods of rest from work he refused to undergo.

The same qualities in him were responsible for his persistent refusal to accept private hospitality where he went on public business. Whether in Ireland or in Great Britain, he must stay at a hotel, and many were the magnates of Liberalism whose ruffled feelings it was necessary to smooth down on this account. He detested being lionized and wanted always, when the public affair was over, to get away to his own quarters.

The demands on him in England for platform work were portentous. Every constituency which wanted a meeting on the Home Rule question wanted Redmond and no other speaker. Of course he could not go to one-twentieth of the places where he was asked for; and his objection to going was not the effort involved but the impossibility either of indefinitely repeating himself or of finding something new to say each time. "If it was in America," he would say, "I would speak as often as you asked me" (it was my misfortune to have to do the asking), "because they never report a speech." The fact is worth noting, for in scores of instances what was adduced by opponents as quotation from his utterances in the United States represented simply some American journalist's impression, perhaps less of what Redmond said than of what, in the reporter's opinion, he should have said. Those who represented him as

putting one face on the argument in America and another in Great Britain did not know the man. "I have made it a rule," he said to me more than once, "to say the extremest things I had to say in the House of Commons."

However, all the machinery which was employed by the opponents of Home Rule to prejudice Ireland's case in the British constituencies proved very ineffectual. For one thing, the lesson of South Africa had gone home. For another, and perhaps a greater, no cause ever had a missionary better adapted to the temperament of the British democracy. The dignity and beauty of Redmond's eloquence, the weight which he could give to an argument, his extraordinary gift for simplifying an issue and grouping thoughts in large bold masses—all these things carried audiences with them.

### III

Between 1908 and 1910 we were still, though with rapidly increasing success, trying to get a hearing for the Irish question—trying to push it once more to the front. The change of leadership from Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman to Mr. Asquith had damped Liberal enthusiasm. We got solid work done for Ireland in the University Act of 1908, though Redmond would have preferred a university of the residential type, like that in which he had himself been an undergraduate. A highly contentious measure was also carried in the Land Act of 1909. But a new power was coming to the front, at once assisting and thwarting our efforts. Mr. Lloyd George put a new fighting spirit into Liberalism: but the objects which he had at heart could only be achieved by a great expenditure of electoral power, and among those objects Irish self-government found only a secondary place.

When Mr. Gladstone spoke of liberty he thought of what he had helped to bring to Greece, Italy, Bulgaria and Montenegro—what he had tried to bring to Ireland. When Mr. Lloyd George spoke of liberty, he thought of what he wanted to bring to England first, and to Ireland by the way; his conviction that Ireland needed self-government was not so deeply rooted as his conviction that the poor throughout the United Kingdom needed help.

Old Age Pensions had been popular, but had not been a fighting issue. Mr. Lloyd George provided the fighting issue with a vengeance when he set himself to pay for them. Unfortunately, Nationalist Ireland had no enthusiasm for the Budget which English Radicalism made its flag. A country of peasant proprietors was easily scared by the very name of land taxes. But above all the Finance Bill dealt drastically, and many thought unfairly, with the powerful liquor trade, which in its branches of brewing and distilling included the main manufacturing interest of southern Ireland, and on its retail side was incredibly diffused through the whole shopkeeping community.

The dissident Nationalists saw their chance. Mr. O'Brien emerged from one of his periodic retirements to lead a whirlwind campaign against the "robber Budget." Redmond and our party were obliged to oppose a measure which pressed so hard as this undoubtedly did on Ireland. Our opposition to the land taxes was withdrawn when valuable concessions had been made, but no such compromise was considered possible on the liquor taxes. On the other hand, it grew clear that the measure was likely to produce a conflict in which the power of the House of Lords might be challenged on the most favourable ground: and for that reason, when the third reading was reached, the Irish party abstained from voting against it. This course, while it facilitated close co-operation with Liberalism in the

general election which followed, weakened us in Ireland ; and eleven out of the eighty-three Nationalist members returned in January 1910 ranked themselves as outside the party ; though Mr. O'Brien's actual following was limited to seven Cork members and Mr. Healy.

#### IV

The action of the Lords in rejecting the Budget of 1909 had an important personal result. It placed Mr. Asquith in a rôle which no one was ever better qualified to fill—that of a Liberal statesman defending principles of democratic control menaced after a long period of security. The Prime Minister, not the Chancellor of the Exchequer, now became the protagonist ; and this was to Redmond's liking, for he felt that Mr. Asquith was more concerned with the problems which had occupied Gladstone's closing years and Mr. Lloyd George with those of a later day.

Yet in the first grave encounter after the rejection of the Budget, Redmond and the leader of the Liberal party came to sharp differences. The general election had amply justified the advice which was urged by him on Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman when the House of Lords rejected the Education Bill in 1906—namely, that the Liberal party should take up at once the inevitable fight before their enormous strength had been frittered away in a series of disappointments. The majority of 1906 was too swollen to be healthy : owing to the ruling out of Home Rule, it included a number of men only partial adherents of the full Liberal programme ; and a diminution of its proportions owing to the traditional swing of the pendulum was certain. But in January 1910 the losses were more than even sanguine Tory prophets predicted. Tories came back equal in strength



to the Liberals: Labour was only forty, so that the Irish party held the balance in the House.

The election had been fought expressly on the issue of Government's claim to enable a Liberal Government to deal with certain problems, among which the Irish question occupied the foremost place. It was easy now for the Tories to argue that the Government appealing to the country on that issue had lost two hundred seats. They said: "You have authority to pass your Budget—but for these vast unconstitutional changes you have no mandate." The temper of their party, which had more than doubled its numbers, was very high: in the Liberal ranks depression reigned and counsels were divided.

At the beginning of the election Mr. Asquith had made a great speech in the Albert Hall in which he outlined the Liberal policy. In it he declared that the pledge against introducing a Home Rule Bill was withdrawn, and that the establishment of self-government for Ireland, subject to the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament, was among the Government's main purposes. But the House of Lords was in the way.

"We shall not assume office and we shall not hold office unless we can secure the safeguards which experience shows us to be necessary for the legislative utility and honour of the party of progress."

This was universally taken to mean that he would obtain a guarantee that the King would, if necessary, consent to the creation of sufficient new peers to override the hostile majority. But as the election progressed, uncertainties developed and an alternative policy of attempting to reform the Upper House was advocated in certain quarters. The question arose also as to whether the first business of the new House should be to pass the Budget which the Lords had thrown out or to proceed with the attack on the power of veto.

Redmond's view on this was not in doubt. At a

meeting in Dublin on February 10, 1910, he declared in the most emphatic manner that to deal with the Budget first would be a breach of Mr. Asquith's pledge to the country, since it would throw away the power of the House of Commons to stop supply. This speech attracted much attention, and the memory of it was present to many a fortnight later when Mr. Asquith was replying to Mr. Balfour at the opening of the debate on the Address. The Prime Minister dwelt strongly on the administrative necessity for regularizing the financial position disturbed by the Upper House's unconstitutional action. He indicated also the need for reform in the composition of that House. But, above all, he disclaimed as improper and impossible any attempt to secure in advance a pledge for the contingent exercise of the Royal prerogative.

"I have received no such guarantee and I have asked for no such guarantee," he said.

The change was marked indeed from the moment when he uttered in the Albert Hall his sentence against assuming office or holding office without the necessary safeguards—an assurance at which the whole vast assembly rose to their feet and cheered. Every word in his speech on the Address added to the depression of his followers and the elation of the Opposition. Redmond followed him at once. In such circumstances as then existed, it was exceedingly undesirable for the Irish leader to emphasize the fact that his vote could overthrow the Government: and the least unnecessary display of this power would naturally and properly have been resented by the Government's following. No one knew this better than Redmond, yet the position demanded bold action. His speech, courteous, as always, in tone, and studiously respectful in its reference to the position of the Crown, was an open menace to the Government. He quoted the Prime Minister's words at the Albert Hall, he appealed to the House at large for the construction

which had been everywhere put on them ; and it was apparent that he had the full sympathy not only of his own party and of Labour, but of most of Mr. Asquith's own following. He concluded in these words :

“ If the Prime Minister is not in a position to say that he has such guarantees as are necessary to enable him to pass a Veto Bill this year, and if in spite of that he intends to remain in office and proposes to pass the Budget into law and then to adjourn—I do not care for how short or how long—the consideration of the Bill dealing with the veto of the House of Lords, that is a policy which Ireland cannot and will not support.”

The effect on the House was such that no one rose to continue the debate. Next day it was resumed, and not only Labour speakers, but one after another of the Liberals, including some of the Prime Minister's most docile, old-fashioned supporters rose and declared that Redmond and not the Leader of the House had expressed their views. So began a remarkable struggle in which the combined forces of the private members—Liberal, Labour and Irish—united by a common desire to destroy the domination of the Peers, contended against the Cabinet's policy of attempting not merely to limit the power of veto but to reconstitute the Upper House. In such a process men saw that the driving force of the majority would waste away and that the composite character of their alliance would lead to certain disruption.

Before the debate on the Address concluded it was plain that Redmond had won. From that period onwards his popularity, and, through him, the popularity of the party which he led, was immensely increased in Great Britain. He was regarded as one of the men who had rendered best service to democracy against privilege. He himself believed that in this first contest Ireland had decided the victory—had decided the overthrow of the House which had so long opposed its liberties. Labour had then neither the essential leader

nor the necessary parliamentary strength: Liberalism was confused and uncertain at the critical moment.

Yet in the very process of achieving this success Redmond laid himself open to attack. The Budget was regarded with dislike by a very large section of Irishmen, and apart from considerations of political strategy the Irish members would certainly have voted against it. Now, the power was in their hands to defeat it finally. By so doing they would, of course, justify to some degree the unconstitutional action of the Lords; but this consideration did not weigh with Mr. O'Brien and Mr. Healy. They accused Redmond of selling the real interests of Ireland to keep a Government in office which could offer nothing in return but a gambling chance of limiting the veto of the Lords. Mr. O'Brien was firmly confident that no such measure would ever pass. He denounced the bargain, not merely because it was a bargain in which Redmond accepted what was in his view a ruinous injustice to Ireland, but because it was a bargain in which the Irish had been outwitted. This line of argument was to be dinned into the ears of Ireland during all the remaining years of Redmond's life. The only conclusive answer to it was to gain Home Rule. If, in the long run, it came to appear that the attackers had been right in their contention, and that Ireland had never received the expected return, the fault for that result lay with Ireland itself no less than with England; it most assuredly did not lie with John Redmond. A great weight of responsibility rests on those who from the first hour of Ireland's opportunity ingeminated distrust to an over-suspicious people.

For the moment, however, the attack made no headway. Irishmen have a shrewd political sense, and they felt that in the struggle to pin Liberal Ministers to the true fighting objective Redmond had won. They were also delighted to see the Irish party openly exert its power—not quite realizing that such exhibitions were



against the interest of the democratic alliance, which had to undergo a grave test. The Government's vacillation had rendered another general election necessary if the Veto question were to be fought out.

On April 29th the House adjourned for the Whitsuntide recess, after which the crisis was to come with the decision of the House of Lords whether to accept or reject the Veto Resolution, which had then passed the Commons. On May 7th, after a short and sudden illness, King Edward died. Both the great English parties were unwilling to renew the most acute political struggle of modern times at the opening of a new reign, and means of accommodation was sought through a Conference which sat first on June 16th and held twenty-one meetings. No representative of Ireland was on this body. On November 10th it reported that no result had come of its efforts, and a new general election was fixed for December 1st.

When the Conference finally broke down Redmond was on his way back from America, whither he had gone accompanied by Mr. Devlin. Mr. T. P. O'Connor at the same time undertook a tour in Canada. The success of these missions showed that the interest and the confidence of the Irish race were higher than at any previous period: the ambassadors brought back a contribution of one hundred thousand dollars to the election funds, and the ship on which they came was saluted by bonfires all along the coast of Cork. Ireland, too, was subscribing as Ireland had not subscribed since Parnell's zenith: and this was an Ireland in which the land-hunger had been largely appeased. The theory that Ireland's demand for self-government was merely generated by Ireland's poverty began to look ridiculous.

It was the cue of the Tory Press at this moment to excite prejudice against the Liberals by representing them as the bondslaves of the "dollar dictator"—ordered about by an Irish autocrat with swollen money-



bags from New York. This line of argument did us little harm in Great Britain ; in Ireland it improved Redmond's position, for it was a useful answer to Mr. O'Brien's representation of him as the abject tool of Liberal politicians. The election, on the whole, strengthened our party. Mr. Healy was thrown out ; and Mr. O'Brien, though he retained the seven seats held by his adherents in Cork, failed in two out of three personal candidatures.

In Great Britain the second election of the year 1910 had the surprising result of reproducing almost exactly the same division of parties : and this added greatly to the strength of the Government. The Tory leaders now, instead of insisting on a maintenance of the old Constitution, went into alternative proposals—including the adoption of the Referendum. This was their constructive line ; the destructive resolved itself largely into an endeavour to focus resistance on the question of Ireland—the purpose for which alone, they said, abolition of the veto was demanded. As has often happened, action taken by the Vatican gave the opponents of Home Rule a useful weapon. The *Ne Temere* decree, promulgated in the year 1908, laid down that any marriage to which a Roman Catholic was a party, if not solemnized according to the rites of the Church of Rome, should be treated as invalid from a canonical point of view. Although legally binding, it should be regarded as no marriage in the eyes of an orthodox Roman Catholic until it was regularized in the manner provided by the Church. The case of an unhappy mixed marriage in Belfast was exploited with fury on a thousand platforms. Another decree, the *Motu Proprio*, was construed as seeking to establish immunity for the clergy from proceedings in civil courts. This, however, was of less platform value, because no instance could be found of a practical application ; whereas the McCann case unquestionably gave Tory disputants a formidable instrument for evoking the ancient distrust of Roman

Catholicism which is so deeply ingrained in the Protestant mind.

In spite of all, the English democracy remained steady in its purpose. Party feeling, however, ran to heights not known in living memory. In July 1911 the Parliament Bill went to the Lords, where it was altered out of all recognition. On July 20th Mr. Asquith sent a letter to Mr. Balfour stating that the King had guaranteed that he would exercise his prerogative to secure that the Bill should be passed substantially as it left the Commons. On the 24th the extreme section of the Tory party, headed by Lord Hugh Cecil, refused to allow the Prime Minister a hearing in the House of Commons.

From an Irish point of view the episode was noteworthy. At the outset of this critical session Redmond had cautioned his party to abstain from giving provocation and from allowing themselves to be provoked. The counsel was the harder to follow because some of the most vehement of the younger Tories sat below the gangway, almost in physical contact with Irish members, and hot words passed. Still, it was grounded into all that we should not allow the great issue then at trial to be represented as an Irish quarrel. Our cause was linked with the whole cause of democracy as against privilege : it was an issue for the whole United Kingdom ; and that was never plainer than on this day of July. English, Scottish and Welsh members hurled interruptions and taunts at each other across the floor of the House, while Irish members sat watching. Something older and more far-reaching than the opposition to Ireland's demand now was felt itself assailed ; and a force in which the Irish movement was only one stream of many swept against it. Anger in the Tory party was not directed against Ireland's representatives ; and an odd chance made this plain. The fierce scene in the House reached its culmination when Ministers withdrew in a body from the Treasury Bench and the two sides

of the House stood up, one cheering, the other hooting, in opposite ranks. For a moment it seemed as if the affair would come to blows, till Mr. Will Crooks, with a genial inspiration, uplifted his voice in song: "Should auld acquaintance be forgot?" The tension was relaxed and members moved out in groups—we Irishmen necessarily among the Tories. In the movement I saw Willie Redmond go up to one of the fiercest among the Ulstermen, whose face was dark with passion. Colloquy began: "Isn't it a hard thing that you wouldn't let us speak?" The Ulsterman turned: "Not let you speak? My dear fellow, we'd listen to you for as long as you liked—it's only these accursed English Liberals." And upon this mutual understanding the two Irishmen walked down the floor into the Lobby exchanging expressions of mutual goodwill and possibly of mutual comprehension.

This little piece of by-play, so full of Irish nature, struck me at the time as something more than amusing—as having in it a ray of hopeful significance. But the most sanguine imagination would never have foreseen the series of events which brought it to pass, not merely that these two men should wear the same uniform, on a common service, but that the same Gazette should publish both their names as enrolled on the same day in the French Legion of Honour. On that day Mr. Charles Craig was a prisoner in Germany, wounded in a famous fight; and Willie Redmond was in a grave towards which Ulster comrades had been the first to carry him. There is an Irish saying, "Men may meet, but the mountains stand apart." In July 1911 such an association as the Gazette of July 1917 illustrated would have seemed hardly more possible than the meeting of the everlasting hills.

The dramatic crisis of the parliamentary struggle between the two Houses of Parliament did not, and could not, come in the House of Commons. Its place was in the final citadel of privilege, and privilege sur-

rendered on August 10th, when the Bill passed the Lords after the most exciting and uncertain division that is ever likely to be known. But there were elements in the Tory party which did not accept defeat, though they had not yet clearly decided on what battleground to renew their efforts. For the moment, however, men were disposed to pause and take stock of the new situation.

But at such a time events cannot stand still, and almost at the same moment as the Parliament Act was carried, the Government took a step which gravely affected the Irish party. Payment of members was established by a resolution of the House of Commons.

Irish Nationalist members had always been paid from the party fund, that is to say, by their supporters. Payment was conditional, not of right, and it was not made except when the member was in attendance : it amounted only to twenty pounds a month. The new payment came from the British Treasury ; it was made irrespective of the desire of constituents, or of any other consideration ; and it amounted to a sum which in a country of small incomes sounded very imposing. Unquestionably the receipt of it weakened the position of the party in the eyes of Ireland, and gave a new sting to the charge of a bargain.

All this was clearly discerned in advance, by no one more than by Redmond ; and an amendment was moved to strike Irish members out of the application of the resolution. But the situation was hopelessly involved, the Irish party having repeatedly voted for payment of members as part of the Radical programme which they supported as affecting any normally governed country ; and Government refused to make the exception.

As a result, Redmond's following lost much of the prestige which had resulted from scrupulous observance of the understanding that no Nationalist member should take office under Government. To join the Irish party had been, in effect, for most men, to make a vow of



poverty. Now, on the contrary, it involved acceptance of what was in Ireland's eyes a well-paid and un-laborious office. The Irish are no less prone than any other nation to take a cynical view of these matters.

Yet assuredly no man ever gave more service for less pay than the Nationalist leader, and it was the harder because he was a man who liked comfort and had no ambition. If at the time of the great "split" he had stood down from politics, success would have been assured to him at the Bar in Ireland, or, more surely still, and far more profitably, at Westminster itself. There never was anyone so well-fitted for the work of a parliamentary barrister who has to deal with great interests before a tribunal largely composed of laymen. No one had the House of Commons tone more perfectly than Redmond, and no one that I ever heard equalled his gift for making a complicated issue appear simple. When he was thrown out of Parliament at the Cork election, he thought of retirement, mainly for one reason: it would be better for his children. Yet, first by personal loyalty to Parnell, later by his loyalty to Ireland, he was held firm to his task—always a poor man, always knowing that it lay in his power, without the least sacrifice of principle, to become rich by a way of work less laborious and infinitely less harassing than that which he pursued.

The effect upon the Irish situation produced by the payment of members was slow to develop, and obscure. But an obvious and grave complication was introduced into both British and Irish politics at the moment when the democratic alliance had achieved its first great objective. Parliament had been in session almost continuously since the beginning of 1909, with the added strain of two general elections thrown in. There was a widespread desire to clear the autumn of 1911, so that members might have some breathing space, and, not less important, devote themselves to propagandist work in their constituencies for the new struggle of carrying measures



under the hardly won Parliament Act. Each of these measures must involve a fight prolonged over three years.

But this desire ran against the purposes of Mr. Asquith's chief lieutenant, whose power and popularity were now at their height. Mr. Lloyd George in the course of the session had introduced his Insurance Bill, and it was welcomed with astonishing effusion from both sides of the House. As discussion proceeded, however, the complexity and difficulty of its proposals, and the number of oppositions which they provoked, became so apparent that it was not in human nature for politicians at such a crisis to forgo the opportunity. Most of the Liberal party would have preferred to drop the Bill temporarily and refer it to a Committee of Enquiry. Mr. Lloyd George was convinced that this would be fatal to his measure, concerning which he was possessed by a missionary zeal. Probably when his career comes under the study of impartial history it will be perceived that never at any moment was he so passionately and so honestly in earnest as upon this quest. But it is certain that by pursuit of it he created enormous difficulties in the way of those reforms which the democratic alliance at large most desired to achieve. He carried his point; an autumn session followed, in which the mind of the electorate was diverted from the Irish question and all other questions except that of Insurance, and Parliament itself was jaded to the brink of exhaustion.

The matter was difficult for us in Ireland because, owing to the different system of Public Health Administration, many of the most important provisions could not apply, and because the Bill as a whole was framed to meet the needs of a highly industrialized and crowded community. Broadly speaking, it was less desired in Ireland than in Great Britain; and even for Great Britain Mr. Lloyd George was legislating in advance

of public opinion rather than in response to it. Mr. O'Brien and his following vehemently opposed the application of the Bill to Ireland; and the Irish Catholic Bishops, by a special resolution, expressed their view to the same effect. The Bill, however, had a powerful advocate in Mr. Devlin, and the Irish party decided to support its extension to Ireland, subject to certain modifications which they obtained.

Apart from the new unsettlement of public opinion which it created both in Great Britain and in Ireland, the Insurance Act added to our difficulties on the Home Rule question. It was clear already that the question of finance lay like a rock ahead. Up to 1908 the proceeds of Irish revenue had always given a margin over the cost of all Irish services, though that margin had dwindled almost to vanishing-point. Old Age Pensions completely turned the beam and left us in the position of costing more than we contributed. Now the outlay on Insurance added half a million a year to the balance against us.

Still, difficulties and perplexities were not limited to one side. The Tory party were much divided since the crisis on the Parliament Act. A section, and the most active section, had been violently opposed to the surrender on the critical division, and these men were profoundly discontented with Mr. Balfour's leadership; so Mr. Balfour, yielding to intimations, suddenly resigned. Somewhat unexpectedly, Mr. Bonar Law was chosen to succeed him, Mr. Long and Mr. Chamberlain waiving their respective claims.

This choice was of sinister augury. Mr. Law did not know Ireland. But, Canadian-born, he came from a country in which the Irish factions and theological enmities had always had their counterpart; his father, a Presbyterian Minister, came of Ulster stock. All the blood in him instinctively responded to the tap of the Orange drum. As far back as January 27, 1911, he had urged armed resistance to Home Rule.

This was a line which Mr. Balfour did not see his way to take, and probably here rather than elsewhere lay the reason for the choice of Mr. Bonar Law. The most active section of the Tory party—probably a minority, for in such cases minorities decide—regarded the passing of the Parliament Act as an outrage on the Constitution, which should be resisted by any means, constitutional or unconstitutional. But no possibility existed of mobilizing a force in Great Britain to fight for the veto of the House of Lords, nor again did the resistance to a new Franchise Act, or even to Welsh Disestablishment, promise to be desperate. In one part only of these islands was there material for a form of struggle in which the ballot-box and the division lobby might be supplemented, if not replaced, by quite other methods of political war. The Tory party saw in Ulster their best fighting chance. There was no use in telling them that they jeopardized the British Constitution; from their point of view the British Constitution—as they had known it—was already gone; it was destroyed in principle and must be either restored or refashioned according to their mind.

This temper, with the attitude towards parliamentary tradition which it produced, rendered the political history of the next two and a half years unlike any other in the history of these countries. The main purpose of this book is to record and illustrate Redmond's action during the period which began with the opening of the Great War. But since that action was conditioned by the circumstances preceding the war—since in two notable ways it aimed at a solution of the fierce political struggle which the war interrupted—the political history connected with the passage of the Home Rule Bill through Parliament must be outlined in detail, with avoidance, so far as may be, of a controversial tone.

## V

It is however necessary, before closing this preliminary review, to take some account of Redmond's relation to his party, and, in general, of the working of the parliamentary machine. Difficulties were imposed on him and on the party from 1910 onwards by our very success.

Electoral chances had placed us apparently in the position of maximum power. From January 1910 onwards we had a Government committed to Home Rule, yet so far dependent on us that we could put it out at any moment. Yet this was by no means an ideal state of affairs. The Government's weakness was our weakness, and they were liable to the reproach that they never proposed a Home Rule measure except when they could not dispense with the Irish vote. Still, from this embarrassing position we achieved an extraordinary result. Right across our path was the obstacle of the House of Lords. It was not an impassable barrier for measures in which the British working classes were keenly interested—for it let the Trades Disputes Bill go through; but it was wholly regardless of Irish and of Welsh popular opinion. Under Redmond's leadership we smashed the House of Lords. The English middle class instinct for compromise was asserting itself, when he took hold and gave direction to the great mass of popular indignation which the hereditary chamber had roused against itself.

Yet guiding action in an alliance of which he was not the head was delicate work. A clumsy speaker in debate might do infinite mischief. When a party is in opposition, all its members can talk, and are encouraged to talk, to the utmost; little harm can be done to one's own side by what is said in criticism of measures proposed. Support and exposition is a much more ticklish business. Add to this the fact that under the fully developed system



of parliamentary obstruction—that is, of using discussion to prevent legislation from being put through—the best service that a member can render to Government is to say nothing, but vote.

The tactics of limiting discussion to chosen speakers in important debates and of discouraging sharply any intervention which might help to delay a division were pushed further in the Irish party than elsewhere. We were there under different conditions from the rest ; our objective was as clearly defined as in a military operation : and we all understood the position. We recognized also that negotiation must be a matter for Redmond and his inner cabinet of three, and that many things could not be usefully discussed in a body of seventy men. But the net result was that the bulk of the party lost interest in their work, and, which was worse, that Ireland lost interest in the bulk of the party. It followed, not unnaturally, that the constituencies held one voting machine to be as good as another, and they did not generally send any men who could have been of service in debate. They did not any longer see their members heading a fiery campaign against rents, or flamboyant in attack on the Government ; they heard very little of them at all. They knew little and cared less about the work of education in British constituencies, which had to be carried on through the mouths of Irish members.

Redmond has often been blamed, but quite unjustly, for failure to attract men of talent into his ranks. Parnell had that power. He had, and used, the right of suggesting names. But under the constitution of the United Irish League (originally the work of Mr. William O'Brien when reunion was accomplished in 1900) the machinery of local conventions was set up and no interference with their choice was permitted to the central directorate—which could only insist that a man properly selected must take the party pledge. Whether this machinery was inevitable or no, cannot be argued here ; but Red-



mond himself complained repeatedly in public that it worked badly. Candidates were often chosen purely for local and even personal considerations, and seldom with any real thought of finding the man best fitted to do Ireland's work at Westminster.

This evil, for it was an evil, resulted from the political stagnation in a country where one dominant permanent issue overshadowed all others. There being no Unionist candidature possible in the majority of constituencies, any contest was deprecated—and from some points of view rightly—as leading to possible faction between Nationalists. The choice of a member really fell into too few hands; the electorate as a whole was not sufficiently interested. Nevertheless, several able men came into our ranks, and under the conditions it was not possible to utilize their talents fully, as they would have been utilized had we been in opposition, not in support of the Government. More could have been done, however, to give them their opportunity, and the responsibility for not varying the list of speakers rests on Redmond. It was his policy to avoid personal intervention, and to leave such choices to be settled by proposals from the party itself. This was a real limitation to his excellence as leader—for leader he was.

There was, however, an even more important limitation arising out of his personal temperament. As chairman, I never expect to see his equal. He had the most perfect public manners of any man I have known, whether in dealing with some vast assembly or small confidential gathering. The latter type of meeting is the more difficult to handle, and nothing could exceed his gift for presiding over and guiding debate. He could set out a political situation to his party with extraordinary force and lucidity. He could also, when he chose, so present an issue as to suggest almost irresistibly the conclusion which he desired—and this was how he led. Where he came short in the quality of leadership was in the personal contact.

His relations with all his followers in the party were courteous and cordial; yet without the least appearance of aloofness he was always aloof. He did not invite discussion. It needed some courage to go to him with a question in policy, and if you went, the answer would be simply a "Yes" or "No." He lacked what Lord Morley attributed to Gladstone, "the priceless gift of throwing his mind into common stock." No one thought more constantly, or further ahead; but he could not, rather than would not, impart his mind by bringing it into contact with others. Men like being taken into their leader's confidence, and he knew this and, I have reason to believe, knew the disability which his temperament laid upon him. Yet he never made an effort to combat it, partly I think from pride, for he hated everything that savoured of earwiggling; he was not going to put constraint upon himself that his following might be more enthusiastic. There was no make-believe about him, and he was never one who liked discussion for discussion's sake.

Profoundly conservative, he had no welcome for novel points of view. I cannot put it more strongly than by saying that he was more apparently aware of the qualities which made T. M. Kettle difficult to handle in his team than of those which made that brilliant personality an ornament and a force in our party. A more serious aspect of this conservatism was the separation which it produced between him and the newer Ireland. He welcomed the Gaelic League and disliked Sinn Féin, but undervalued both as forces: he was never really in touch with either of them. Ideally speaking, he ought to have seen to it that his party, which represented mainly the standpoint of Parnell's day, was kept in sympathy with the new Young Ireland.

But from the point of view of those who shared his outlook—and they were the vast majority, in Ireland and in the party—Redmond's essential limitation, as a

leader, was that he lacked the magnetic qualities which produce idolatry and blind allegiance. What his followers gave him was admiration, liking and profound respect. No less than this was strictly due to his high standard of honour, his scorn of all personal pettiness, his control of temper. In twelve years I heard many complaints of the manner in which things were managed in the party : I scarcely ever remember to have heard anyone complain of him. He was always spoken of as " The Chairman " ; no one attributed to him sole responsibility ; and he was the last on whom any man desired to lay a fault.

Yet when it came, as it often did, to a question of weighing advices one against the other, there was no mistake how men's opinions inclined. He had taught his party by experience to have almost implicit confidence in his judgment ; and by this earned confidence he led and he ruled.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE HOME RULE BILL OF 1912

THE year 1912, in which the straight fight on Home Rule was to begin, opened stormily. Mr. Churchill was announced to speak under the auspices of the Ulster Liberal Association in the Ulster Hall at Belfast. It was the hall in which his father, Lord Randolph Churchill, had used the famous phrase "Ulster will fight and Ulster will be right." Belfast was determined that the son should not unsay what the father had said in this consecrated building; it would be, as an Ulster member put it in the House of Commons, "a profanation." On this first round, Ulster won; Mr. Churchill spoke at Belfast, but not in the Ulster Hall. There were angry demonstrations against him; his person had to be strongly protected and he went away from the meeting by back streets. It was noticeable that no such precautions were needed for Redmond, who attended the meeting and walked quite unmolested through the crowd. The British electorate, as a whole, was somewhat scandalized by the exhibition of so violent a temper; but the education of the British electorate was only beginning.

Congestion of business from the previous session deferred the introduction of the Home Rule Bill till April. Great demonstrations for and against it were held in advance. In Dublin on March 31st was such a gathering as scarcely any man remembered. O'Connell Street is rather a boulevard than a thoroughfare; it is as wide as Whitehall and its length is about the same. On that day, from the Parnell monument at the north end to the O'Connell monument at the south, you could have walked on the

shoulders of the people. Four separate platforms were erected, and Redmond spoke from that nearest to the statue of his old chief. He dwelt on the universality of the demonstration; nine out of eleven corporations were represented officially by their civic officers; professional men, business men, were all fully to the fore. But one section of his countrymen were conspicuously absent. To Ulster he had this to say:

“We have not one word of reproach or one word of bitter feeling. We have one feeling only in our hearts, and that is an earnest longing for the arrival of the day of reconciliation.”

A feature of that gathering, little noted at the time, assumes strange significance in retrospect. At one platform Patrick Pearse, then headmaster of St. Enda's school, spoke in Irish. What he said may be thus roughly rendered:

“There are as many men here as would destroy the British Empire if they were united and did their utmost. We have no wish to destroy the British, we only want our freedom. We differ among ourselves on small points, but we agree that we want freedom, in some shape or other. There are two sections of us—one that would be content to remain under the British Government in our own land, another that never paid, and never will pay, homage to the King of England. I am of the latter, and everyone knows it. But I should think myself a traitor to my country if I did not answer the summons to this gathering, for it is clear to me that the Bill which we support to-day will be for the good of Ireland and that we shall be stronger with it than without it. I am not accepting the Bill in advance. We may have to refuse it. We are here only to say that the voice of Ireland must be listened to henceforward. Let us unite and win a good Act from the British; I think it can be done. But if we are tricked this time, there is a party in Ireland, and I am one of them, that will advise



the Gael to have no counsel or dealings with the Gall [the foreigner] for ever again, but to answer them henceforward with the strong hand and the sword's edge. Let the Gall understand that if we are cheated once more there will be red war in Ireland."

The platform where Pearse spoke was set up within a stone's throw of the General Post Office in which, four years later, he was to give effect to the words he spoke then and to earn his own death in undoing the work of Redmond's lifetime. At that moment no one heeded his utterance, nor the speech, also in Irish, of Professor John MacNeill from another platform, which went, as its speaker was destined to go, half the way with Pearse.

But Redmond never attempted to conceal the existence of this element in Ireland. Speaking on the introduction of the Home Rule Bill on April 11th, he dealt at the very opening with the charge that the Irish people wanted separation and that the Irish leaders were separatists in disguise :

"I will be perfectly frank on this matter. There always has been, and there is to-day, a certain section of Irishmen who would like to see separation from this country. They are a small, a very small section. They were once a very large section. They are a very small section, but the men who hold these views at this moment only desire separation as an alternative to the present system, and if you change the present system and give into the hands of Irishmen the management of purely Irish affairs, even that small feeling in favour of separation will disappear ; and if it survives at all, I would like to know how under those circumstances it could be stronger or more powerful for mischief than at the present moment."

Sincerer words were never spoken, nor, I think, a better justified forecast. Where Redmond and all of us were wrong was that we underestimated the possibility of accomplishing what Pearse ultimately accomplished, even

when assisted by the widespread disillusionment and sense of betrayal which was the atmosphere of 1916.

But no one in Ireland in 1912 thought of a separatist rebellion. What was on all tongues was the possibility of physical resistance to Home Rule. The debate on the first reading went by with little reference to this contingency, but Mr. Bonar Law closed his speech on that note. He had attended the great counter-demonstration in Belfast which followed ours in Dublin and had seen in it "the expression of the soul of a people."

"These people look upon their being subject to an executive Government taken out of the Parliament in Dublin with as much horror, I believe with more horror, than the people of Poland ever regarded their being put under subjection by Russia; they say they will not submit except by force to such government. These people in Ulster are under no illusion. They know they cannot fight the British Army. But these men are ready, in what they believe to be the cause of justice and liberty, to lay down their lives."

Bloodshed, if bloodshed there was to be, was anticipated in Ulster only, and the resistance indicated at this point was purely passive. But even after the Bill had been introduced, Tories entertained the hope that a Nationalist Convention might save them trouble and reject what the Government offered. Even Mr. O'Brien, however, had given the Bill a lukewarm approval, and at this moment Redmond's prestige stood very high. When the Convention assembled, he utilized that advantage to the full. These assemblies presented a problem which might intimidate the most capable chairman. Theoretically deliberative, they had at least a representative character; all branches of the United Irish League, all branches of the Hibernians and Foresters, all county and district councils sent up their chosen men, to whom were added such clergy as chose to attend. The result was a mass of over two thousand persons packed into

a single room ; they deliberated in the physical conditions of a crowd ; hearing was difficult, disorder only too easily brought about. I have seen one of these Conventions sharply divided in opinion, and counting of votes would have been impossible. On this day, however, there was only one opinion : the business was to manifest support and to strengthen the leader's hand. Redmond at the outset laid down the proposition that it was their " duty " as Nationalists to accept what he described as a far better Bill than Gladstone ever offered. He further indicated the need for a resolution that the question of supporting, proposing or rejecting amendments should be left to the Irish party. This was promptly carried by acclamation. All decisions were unanimous that day.

But before this or any other resolution was put to the Convention, Redmond asked the multitude there to give, what they gave most willingly, a welcome to Mr. Gladstone's grandson, who as a young member of Parliament had just voted for the Bill. The greeting which he received showed that Ireland had not forgotten what Gladstone's last years had been.

In the first of his speeches upon the Bill, Sir Edward Grey, a survivor from Gladstone's Ministry, said, as he threw a glance back over the struggle from 1886 to 1893 :

" Two things stirred me at the time ; they stir me still. One is Mr. Gladstone's intense grip of the fact that there was a national spirit in Ireland, and the splendour of the effort he made in his last years to acknowledge and reconcile that spirit. The other is the Irish response to Mr. Gladstone. It was not the assent of mere tacticians who had gained an advocate and a point. It was genuine, warm and living feeling, a response of gratitude and sympathy the same in kind and as living as his own."

If Redmond's task from 1912 onwards was not lightened by the existence of any such genuine, warm and

living feeling for any of Mr. Asquith's Ministry, perhaps Ireland is not to blame. There was no intense grip of any fact in the Government's attitude, and on one cardinal point they were unstable as water. Sir Edward Carson, in opposing the introduction of the Bill, had used the words: "What argument is there that you can raise for giving Home Rule to Ireland that you do not equally raise for giving Home Rule to that Protestant minority in the north-east province?" Redmond, following him, made one of his few false moves in debate. "Is that the proposal? Is that the demand?" he asked. Sir Edward Carson shot the question at him: "Will you agree to it?" Seldom does the House see a practised speaker so much embarrassed; Redmond in confusion passed to another topic. He was soon to be confronted with that same line of reasoning, pushed not dialectically by an opponent, but as a step in parliamentary negotiation from the Treasury Bench. Mr. Churchill, who introduced the Second Reading, made it apparent that the demonstration in Belfast had not been wasted on him.

"Whatever Ulster's rights may be," he said, "they cannot stand in the way of the whole of the rest of Ireland. Half a province cannot impose a permanent veto on the nation. The utmost they can claim is for themselves. I ask, do they claim separate treatment for themselves? Do the counties of Down and Antrim and Londonderry, for instance, ask to be excepted from the scope of this Bill? Do they ask for a parliament of their own, or do they wish to remain here? We ought to know."

This was to proceed at once into the region of a bargain. Mr. Gladstone, with his grip on the existence of a national spirit in Ireland, would have known that concession on such point was a very different matter from some alteration in the financial terms or in the composition of the Parliament. It admitted, in fact, the contention that Ireland was not a nation but a geographical expression.



As soon as the Bill went into Committee, the result was seen. The first serious amendment proposed to exclude the four counties, Antrim, Down, Armagh, and Derry, and it was moved from the Liberal benches. Three Liberal speakers supported it in the early stages of a debate which lasted to the third day—and on the division the majority, which had been 100 for the Second Reading, fell to 69. Mr. Churchill did not vote—nor, although this was not then so apparently significant, did Mr. Lloyd George.

Thus from the very first the point of danger revealed itself. By the mere threat of a resistance which could only be overcome through the use of troops, Ulster had made the first dint for the insertion of a wedge into the composite Home Rule alliance, and into the Cabinet itself. All this had been gained without any tactical sacrifice, without even anything like a full disclosure of the force which lay behind this line of attack.

Nor was the full extent of weakness revealed. In such a case, much depended on the personality of the man who moved the amendment, and Mr. Agar-Robartes was one of the most whimsically incongruous figures in the Government ranks. Twentieth-century Liberalism wears a somewhat drab and serious aspect, but this ultra-fashionable example of gilded youth would have been in his place among the votaries of Charles James Fox. The climax of his incongruity was a vehement and rather antiquated Protestantism; he was, for instance, among the few who opposed the alteration of the Coronation oath to a formula less offensive to Catholics. Nobody doubted that his Cornish constituents would endorse whatever he did, for the House held few more popular human beings, but no one took him very seriously as a politician. This particular view of his certainly made no breach between him and his inseparable associate, Mr. Neil Primrose, who, as time went on, took as strong a line against Ulster's claims as Agar-Robartes did for



them.—*Sunt lacrimæ rerum*. I remember vividly in August 1914 the sudden apparition of this pair, side by side as always, in their familiar place below the gangway, but in quite unfamiliar guise, for khaki was still new to the benches. The two brilliant lads—for they were little more—have gone now, swept into the abyss of war's wreckage; the controversy which divided them remains, virulent as ever.

Agar-Robartes stuck to his guns and voted against the Bill henceforward; the other Liberals who supported him were ultimately brought into the Government lobby. What had really mattered was Mr. Churchill's speech on the Second Reading. Captain Pirrie, one of Redmond's few closely attached friends outside the Irish party, bound, I think, far more in affection to the Irish leader than to his own chiefs, complained angrily of the Government's evasive reticence. This brought up the Prime Minister, whose speech was brief and direct:

"This amendment proceeds on an assumption which I believe is radically false, namely, that you can split Ireland into parts. You can no more split Ireland into parts than you can split England or Scotland into parts."

When Sir Edward Carson had spoken, the Ulster leader's speech enabled Redmond to point out that Ulstermen refused to accept this proposal as a means by which Ulster might be reconciled to Home Rule, but were ready to vote for it simply as a wrecking amendment. General opinion on both sides of the House agreed that the amendment made the Bill impossible; and the majority held that therefore Ulster must give way. Ulster, on the other hand, held that therefore there must be no Home Rule Bill. But there was a Liberal element evidently not convinced that Home Rule might not be possible with Ulster excluded. Mr. Birrell admitted that the plan of segregating a portion had been considered, but had been rejected, on the merits, as unworkable. Still he professed himself open to conviction. The argument

which Mr. Bonar Law decided to use was a threat. Government are saying to the people of Ulster, he said, "Convince us that you are in earnest, show us that you will fight, and we will yield to you as we have yielded to everybody else." Captain Craig, following, said that the Prime Minister anticipated that Ulster's objection would after a few years be merely a ripple on the surface. "If the right honourable gentleman has challenged this part of his Majesty's dominions to civil war, we accept the challenge."

This temper soon had ugly expression. On June 29th an excursion party of the Ancient Order of Hibernians (the Roman Catholic counterpart to the Orange Order) met with another excursion party of Protestants, mainly Sunday-school children, at a place called Castledawson. Taunts were exchanged and one of the Hibernians tried to snatch a flag from the other procession; so a disturbance began in which some of the children were hurt and many frightened. This discreditable incident was magnified with all the rancour of partisanship—as in the state of feeling must have been expected. But the reprisals were startling. All Catholics were driven out of the Belfast shipyards; many were injured, and over two thousand men were still deprived of work on July 12th, when the Unionist party held a great meeting at Blenheim. Mr. Bonar Law, facing for the first time a vast typical gathering of his supporters, said that, on a previous occasion, when speaking as little more than a private member of Parliament, he had counselled action outside constitutional limits. Now, he emphasized it that he took the same attitude as leader of the Unionist party.

"We shall use any means—whatever means seem to us to be most likely to be effective—any means to deprive them" (the Government) "of the power they have usurped and to compel them to face the people whom they have deceived. The Home Rule Bill in spite of us may go

through the House of Commons. There are things stronger than parliamentary majorities. I can imagine no length of resistance to which Ulster will go in which I shall not be ready to support them, and in which they will not be supported by the overwhelming majority of the British people."

Sir Edward Carson said on behalf of Ulster :

"It will be our duty shortly to take such steps—and, indeed, they are already being taken—as will perfect our arrangements for making Home Rule absolutely impossible. We will shortly challenge the Government to interfere with us if they dare. We will do this regardless of consequences, of all personal loss and inconvenience. They may tell us, if they like, that this is treason."

Well might Mr. Bonar Law say in returning thanks that this day "would be a turning-point in their political history."

Moderate opinion was by no means glad to have reached this turning-point, and *The Times* rebuked Mr. Law for his violence. But, tactically, the Unionists were right : they had a Government indisposed to action and they made the most of their opportunity. Mr. Churchill again took up the conduct of the controversy, and in the recess proceeded to outline a policy which he described as federal devolution. The Prime Minister had said you could no more split Ireland into parts than England or Scotland. But Mr. Churchill argued that, in the interest of efficiency, England must be divided into provincial units with separate assemblies ; that Lancashire, for instance, had on many matters a very different outlook from that of Yorkshire. He did not draw the conclusion ; but it was not difficult to infer that Mr. Churchill was at least as ready to give separate rights to Ulster as to any group of English counties, and was equally ready to pitch overboard the Prime Minister's argument for refusing partition in Ireland.

In the meantime Ulster's preparations continued. It

was indicated that they would bear a religious character, and the Protestant Churches were deeply involved. The proposal of a Covenant was made public in August, though the actual signing of it was deferred to "Ulster Day," September 28th. Sir Edward Carson was provided with a guard carrying swords and wooden rifles, and in one instance dummy cannon made a feature of the pageant. These things excited a good deal of derision, and the language of the Covenant was held to be only "hypothetical treason." The main words were :

"We stand by one another in defending for ourselves and our children our cherished position of equal citizenship in the United Kingdom and in using all means which may be found necessary to defeat the present conspiracy to set up a Home Rule Parliament in Ireland."

The Covenant in that committed the signatories to no breach of the law ; it was only a pledge to refuse to recognize the authority of a Parliament not yet in being. All Ulster's proceedings might so far be dismissed, as the Attorney-General, Mr. Rufus Isaacs, dismissed them, as being "a demonstration admirably stage-managed, and led by one of great histrionic gifts." The threats of the use of force, said the Attorney-General, would not turn them aside by a hair's-breadth. Mr. Asquith, equally vigorous in his speech, was less decisive in his conclusions. Speaking at Ladybank on October 5th, he denounced "the reckless rodomontade of Blenheim, which furnishes forth the complete grammar of anarchy." But he was careful to point out that there was no demand for separate treatment for Ulster, and that Irish Unionists were simply refusing to consent to Home Rule under any conditions. He refrained from saying how a demand for separate treatment of Ulster would be dealt with if it were made.

When Parliament resumed its sittings, in a temper much heated by all the challenge and controversy of the recess, Mr. Lloyd George pushed this line of argument



a shade further. He argued that Sir Edward Carson himself persisted in treating Ireland as a unit.

"Until Ulster departs from that position there is no case. Ulster has a right to claim a hearing for separate treatment; she has no right to say, 'Because we do not want Home Rule ourselves the majority of Irishmen are not to have Home Rule.'"

Yet upon the balance of events, Unionists were probably disappointed. A very strong British feeling against Sir Edward Carson and his Belfast following had been generated by the expulsion of Catholics from the shipyards and in general by the advocacy of civil war. In October 1912 several notable men who had previously counted as Unionists—Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Sir Frederick Pollock, Sir J. West-Ridgway—all declared for Home Rule. Exasperation against the incidence of the new Insurance Act lost the Government votes at every by-election; but the Irish cause on the whole gained ground, and the chief cause of that advance was the respect universally felt for Redmond's personality and leadership. On November 22nd he attended a huge meeting of the National Liberal Federation at Nottingham along with the Prime Minister and received a wonderful welcome. The step was novel. Never since Parnell's work began had the leader of the Irish people stood on the same platform in Great Britain with the leader of any English party. It was, however, the return of a compliment, for Mr. Asquith had come to Dublin in the summer and there spoken along with the Irish leader. Moreover, a recent incident had shown how necessary it was to maintain the closest co-operation; a snap division on November 11th had inflicted defeat on the Government and occasioned loss of perhaps a fortnight's parliamentary time.

But in the very act of thus strengthening his hold on the British electorate, Redmond gave ground to those in Ireland who desired to represent him as a mere tool



of the Liberal party, a pawn in Mr. Asquith's game. Foreseeing this evil did not help to combat it, and on the whole it was Redmond's inclination to take a sanguine view of his country's good sense and generosity.

The Committee stage of discussion lasted beyond the end of the year. On the finance arrangements Redmond had to face fierce opposition from Mr. O'Brien's party, which was endorsed by the Irish Council of County Councils. Here difficulties were inevitable, and attack was easy either for the Unionists, who pressed the argument that Ireland was to be started on its career of self-government with a subsidy of some two millions per annum from Great Britain, or for the O'Brienites, who urged that the country was already overtaxed in proportion to its resources, that it needed large expenditure for development, and that the possible budget indicated by the Bill left no serious possibility for reducing taxes or for undertaking even necessary expenditure. Redmond, on the other hand, was bound to conciliate the vested interests of civil servants, officials in all degrees, and the immense police force. Retrenchment on the vast area of unproductive expenditure which Castle government had created could only be hoped for at a very distant date. He could not therefore promise substantial economy; nor could he argue for a further increase of subsidy without playing into the Tories' hands. On all this detail of the measure, the attack in debate was bound to be very powerful.

So far as Great Britain was concerned, the reply of Home Rulers was tolerably effective. In 1886 it had been feasible to propose Home Rule with an Imperial contribution of two and a half millions. By 1893 the possible margin had dropped heavily, and Mr. Gladstone had foretold that within fifteen years Ireland would absorb more money for purely Irish services than Irish taxation produced. This prophecy had been fulfilled to the letter, and everyone saw that to continue the Union meant

increasing this charge automatically. It was better to cut the loss and at least say that it should not exceed a fixed figure.

But in Ireland men dwelt always on the Report of the Financial Relations Commission, which had represented the balance as heavily against England and the account for overtaxation of the poorer country as reaching three hundred millions. No man quoted this document oftener than Redmond, and none was a firmer believer in its justification. But he realized, as his countrymen did not, that such a claim could never hope for cash settlement, that its value was as an argument for the concession of freedom upon generous terms. How could he urge that the terms proposed were ungenerous, when Great Britain offered to pay the cost of all Irish services—amounting to a million and a half more than Irish revenue—and to provide over and above this a yearly grant of half a million, dropping gradually, it is true, but still remaining at a subsidy of two hundred thousand a year so long as the finance arrangements of the Bill lasted?

Nevertheless, these arrangements were bad ones, and this was where the Bill was most vulnerable on its merits; for self-government without the control of taxation and expenditure is at best an unhopeful experiment.

But in the public mind at large only one difficulty bulked big, and that was Ulster. Men on both sides began to be uneasy about the consequences of what was happening, and this temper reflected itself in the House. On New Year's Day 1913, at the beginning of the Report stage, Sir Edward Carson moved the exclusion of the province of Ulster. His speech was in a new tone of studied conciliation. But, as the Prime Minister immediately made clear, there was no offer that if this concession were made opposition would cease. It was merely recommended as the sole alternative to civil

war. Redmond, in following, let fall an *obiter dictum* on the position of the Irish controversy :

“ No one who observes the current of popular opinion in this country can doubt for one instant that if this opposition from the north-east corner of Ulster did not exist, Home Rule would go through to-morrow as an agreed Bill.”

For this reason, he said, he would go almost any length within certain well-defined limits to meet that section of his fellow-countrymen. His conditions were, first, that the proposal must be a genuine one, not put forward as a piece of tactics to wreck the Bill, but frankly as part of a general settlement of the Home Rule question ; secondly, that it must be of reasonable character ; and thirdly, not inconsistent with the fundamental principle of national self-government. Ulster's present proposal, if accepted, carried with it no promise of a settlement ; it was unreasonable as proposing to strike out of Ireland five counties with Nationalist majorities. But finally, on a broader ground, it destroyed the national right of Ireland.

“ Ireland for us is one entity. It is one land. Tyrone and Tyrconnell are as much a part of Ireland as Munster or Connaught. Some of the most glorious chapters connected with our national struggle have been associated with Ulster—aye, and with the Protestants of Ulster—and I declare here to-day, as a Catholic Irishman, notwithstanding all the bitterness of the past, that I am as proud of Derry as of Limerick. Our ideal in this movement is a self-governing Ireland in the future, when all her sons of all races and creeds within her shores will bring their tribute, great or small, to the great total of national enterprise, national statesmanship, and national happiness. Men may deride that ideal ; they may say that it is a futile and unreliable ideal, but they cannot call it an ignoble one. It is an ideal that we, at any rate, will cling to, and because we cling to it, and because

it is there, embedded in our hearts and natures, it is an absolute bar to such a proposal as this amendment makes, a proposal which would create for all times a sharp, eternal dividing line between Irish Catholics and Irish Protestants, and a measure which would for all time mean the partition and disintegration of our nation. To that we as Irish Nationalists can never submit."

Later in the debate, Mr. Bonar Law admitted quite frankly the argument against treating all Ulster as Unionist, and he proceeded to suggest that any county in Ulster might be given power to decide whether or not it should come into the new Parliament. It was plain, however, and Mr. Churchill made it plainer, that the Unionist leader did not speak for Ulster; Ulster's intention was still to use its own opposition to Home Rule as a bar to self-government for the whole of Ireland.

Equally was it plain that the plébiscite by counties would not be unacceptable to Mr. Churchill.

The proposal for the exclusion of the entire province was defeated by a majority of 97 and the Third Reading was carried by 110. A few days later the city of Derry returned a Home Ruler, and the Ulster representation became seventeen for the Bill and sixteen against. This dramatic change produced a considerable effect on British opinion. Redmond, speaking at a luncheon given to the winner, Mr. Hogg, indicated the lines on which he was disposed to bargain. He would be willing to give Ulster more than its proportional share of representation in the Irish Parliament.

The debate in the House of Lords was marked by certain speeches which showed that public opinion had moved considerably. Lord Dunraven declared for the Second Reading, though pressing all the line of objection to the Bill which had been taken by Mr. O'Brien and his party. He heaped scorn also as an Irishman upon "this absurd theory of two nations which is only invented to make discord where accord would naturally be." Lord



MacDonnell, whose administrative experience could no more be questioned than his genius for administration, held that though amendment was needed the framework of the Bill was good, and that urgent necessity existed for the change to self-government. He alluded to the opinion expressed by Mr. Balfour in 1905, that the proper way of reforming Dublin Castle was by increasing the power of the Chief Secretary and his Under-Secretary, and thereby getting a stronger grip on the various departments of the "complicated system" prevailing. "I thought so too," said Lord MacDonnell, who in 1905 as Under-Secretary had tried his hand at this reform. "It was one of the illusions that I took with me to Ireland twenty years ago—but I am now a wiser man. . . . My observation of the Boards had convinced me before I left Ireland that no scheme of administrative reform which depends on bureaucratic organization for its success, or which has not behind it a popular backing, has the least chance of success in an attempt to establish in Ireland a government that is satisfactory to the Imperial Parliament or acceptable to the Irish people."—This was a repudiation of the Irish Council Bill of 1907 by its main author.

Lord Grey, a vivid and attractive personality, declared strongly for "such a measure of Home Rule as will give the Irish people power to manage their own domestic affairs." It was a conviction that had been forced upon him by his experience of Greater Britain. "Practically every American, every Canadian, every Australian is a Home Ruler." But the settlement must proceed upon federal lines; his ideal for Ireland was the provincial status of Ontario or Quebec, linked federally to a central parliament at Westminster.

The most significant speech, however, came from the Archbishop of York. Disclaiming all party allegiance, Dr. Lang claimed to express "the opinions of a very large number of fair-minded citizens." He admitted that



there was an Irish problem, which could not be solved by "a policy however generous of promoting the economic welfare of Ireland." "Some measure of Home Rule is necessary not only to meet the needs of Ireland but the needs of the Imperial Parliament." This Bill, however, in his opinion, was ill-adapted to the latter purpose. It would be a block rather than a relief to the congestion of business. But these objections were "abstract and academic" in face of the real governing fact.

"The figure of Ulster, grim, determined, menacing, dominates the scene. . . . We may not like it. Frankly, I do not like it. It carries marks of religious and racial bitterness and suspicion. It uses language about disobedience to the law which must provoke disquiet and dislike in the minds of all who care for the good government of the country. I am not competent, because I have not shared in the experience of the history of the Ulster people, to decide whether or not their fears are groundless. All these things seem to me to be beside the point. If Ulster means to do what it says, then the results are certainly such as no citizen can contemplate without grave concern. . . . I admit, everyone must admit, that there are circumstances in which a Government is entitled and bound to run this kind of risk. At the present time I think we all feel that there is a call upon Governments to stiffen rather than to slacken their determination in the presence of threats of disobedience or disorder. I will go further and admit that there is one condition which would justify in my mind His Majesty's Government in running the risk of the forcible coercion of Ulster. That condition is that they should have received from the people of this country an authority, clear and explicit, to undertake that risk. It is perfectly true that the Prime Minister gave notice that if his party were returned to power they would be free to raise again the question of Home Rule, but there

is a great difference between the abstract question of Home Rule and a concrete Home Rule Bill."

That speech undoubtedly represented the temper prevailing in the class of balancing electors which is so large in England. Some of us who read it at the time recognized how far the long struggle for autonomy had prevailed, but also how strong were the forces which no argument could reach. Men like Dr. Lang might be offended, even shocked by the action of those who claimed to be England's garrison in Ireland; but they would be very slow to use force against such a section, although quite ready to justify coercion of the Irish majority. Yet what impressed Redmond was the advance made, rather than the revelation of what resistance remained. He had been more than thirty years an advocate of Ireland's cause; and now by the spokesman of the impartial educated mind of England the justice of that cause was admitted. The argument that a general election was necessary, or would be efficacious in solving the problem, was one with which he felt well able to contend. In that speech the Archbishop of York admitted his impression that in by-elections there had been "much more of Food Taxes and the Insurance Act than of Home Rule."

On the other hand, for Ulster such a speech had the plainest possible moral: Ulster's game was to become more grim, more determined, more menacing. The Home Rule controversy had now resolved itself into a question whether Ulster really meant business. Sir Edward Carson set himself to make that plain beyond yea or nay.

In a speech delivered in Belfast, at the opening of a new drill hall, he asked and answered the question, "Why are we drilling?" He and his colleagues did not recognize the Parliament Act, he said; a law passed under it would be only an act of usurpation, a breach of right. "We seek nothing but the elementary right implanted

in every man: the right, if you are attacked, to defend yourself."

Ulster was going to stand by its Covenant.

"When we talk of force, we use it, if we are driven to use it, to beat back those who will dare to barter away those elementary rights of citizenship which we have inherited. . . . Go on, be ready, you are our great army. Under what circumstances you have to come into action, you must leave with us. There are matters which give us grave consideration which we cannot and ought not to talk about in public. You must trust us that we will select the most opportune methods of, if necessary, taking on ourselves the whole government of the community in which we live. I know a great deal of that will involve statutory illegality, but it will also involve much righteousness."

Some of the questions which needed grave consideration were suggested by happenings that followed hard on this speech. Much ridicule had been poured on the drillings with dummy muskets. Ulster evidently decided to push the matter a step further. A consignment of one thousand rifles with bayonets, in cases marked "electrical fittings," was seized at Belfast on June 3, 1913. Other incidents of the same nature followed. It was argued, by those who sought to represent the whole campaign as an elaborate piece of bluff, that the weapons were useless and that they were deliberately sent to be seized. A feature which scarcely bore out this view was that one consignment was addressed to the Lord-Lieutenant of an Ulster county who was also an officer in the Army. A justice of the peace, or an officer, to whom a consignment of arms had been sent for a Nationalist organization would have been ordered to clear himself in the fullest way of complicity, and even of sympathy, or he would have forfeited his commission. The nobleman involved, however, made no explanation, and was probably never officially asked to do so.

It was commonly believed in the House of Commons that at some point, if not repeatedly, Government consulted the Irish leader or his principal advisers as to whether measures of repression should be undertaken against Ulster. No such consultation took place. But the opinion prevailing among the leading Nationalists was no doubt known or inferred. Mr. Dillon, speaking on June 16, 1914, when the danger-point had been clearly reached, justified the previous abstinence from coercion.

"I have held the view from the beginning that it would not have been wise policy for a Government engaged in the great work of the political emancipation of a nation to embark on a career of coercion. I knew, and knew well, all the difficulties and all the reproaches that the Government would have to face if they abstained from coercion. It is a difficult and almost unprecedented course for a Government to take, and it is, as the Chief Secretary said, a courageous one. But with all its difficulties and dangers it is the right course. We who have been through the mill know what the effect of coercion is. We know that you do not put down Irishmen by coercion. You simply embitter them and stiffen their backs."

It is therefore unquestionable that the decision to do nothing had Redmond's approval. Whatever may be thought of that policy, one factor was assuredly underestimated—the effect produced on the public mind by the spectacle of highly placed personages defying the law and defying it with impunity. It was possible to argue that a conviction for hypothetical treason would be difficult to secure and that failure in a prosecution would only encourage lawless conduct. But Privy Counsellors who made preparations for prospective rebellion and remained Privy Counsellors were a new phenomenon. The public thought, and it was apparent that the public would think, that Government was afraid to quarrel with what is called Society. Society shared that belief



and began to extend its influence in a new direction. No Government can permit itself to be defied without general relaxation of discipline, and the effects extended themselves to the Army. At a meeting on July 12th in Ulster a telegram was read out from "Covenanters" in an Ulster regiment, urging "No surrender until ammunition is spent and the last drop of blood." In his speech on that occasion Sir Edward Carson declared that every day brought him at least half a dozen letters from British officers asking to be enrolled among the future defenders of Ulster. One officer, he said, having signed the Covenant, was ordered to send in his papers and resign his commission. The officer refused to do so, and after a short time was simply told to resume his duty.

"We have assurance from the Prime Minister," said Sir Edward Carson, "that the forces of the Crown are not to be used against Ulster. Government know that they could not rely on the Army to shoot down the people of Ulster."

Later events in Ireland furnished a grim commentary as to what the Army would be willing, and would not be willing, to do in the way of shooting down in Ireland; and such words as these of Sir Edward Carson were destined to be among the chief difficulties which Redmond had to encounter when he sought to lead Ireland into the war.

At the meeting of that day, delegates were present from a British League to assist Ulster in her resistance. Behind this new quasi-military organization stood now the whole of one great party. Sir Edward Carson transmitted a message from Mr. Bonar Law in these words:

"Whatever steps we may feel compelled to take, whether they be constitutional, or in the long run whether they be unconstitutional, we will have the whole of the Unionist party under his leadership behind us."

Later in the autumn, on the first anniversary of Ulster Day, there was formally announced the formation of an



Ulster Provisional Government, with a Military Committee attached to it. A guarantee fund to indemnify all who might be involved in damaging consequences was set on foot, and a million sterling was indicated as the necessary amount to be obtained.

In the meantime signs of distress came from the Liberal camp. Mr. Churchill, in speeches to his constituents, renewed the suggestions for partition. More notable was a letter from Lord Loreburn, who had till recently been Lord Chancellor, and who was known as a steady and outspoken Home Ruler. He appealed in *The Times* of September 11, 1913, for a conference between parties on the Irish difficulty. Irish Nationalist opinion grew profoundly uneasy, and Redmond at Limerick on October 12th set out his position with weighty emphasis. He referred to the fact that during the summer he himself, assisted by Mr. Devlin, had followed Sir Edward Carson and other Ulster speakers from place to place through Great Britain, and on the same ground had stated the case for Home Rule. He claimed, and with justice, a triumphant success for this counter-campaign.

"The argumentative opposition to Home Rule is dead, and all the violent language, all the extravagant action, all the bombastic threats, are but indications that the battle is over."

Still, he was too old a politician, he said, not to build a bridge of gold to convenience his opponents' retreat, provided that the fruits of victory were not flung away. Mr. Churchill had told the Ulstermen that there was no demand they could make which would not be matched, and more than matched, by their countrymen and the Liberal party. On this it was necessary to be explicit.

"Irish Nationalists can never be assenting parties to the mutilation of the Irish nation; Ireland is a unit. It is true that within the bosom of a nation there is room for diversities of the treatment of government and of administration, but a unit Ireland is and Ireland

must remain. . . . The two-nation theory is to us an abomination and a blasphemy."

These were carefully chosen words, and they indicated a possible acceptance of the proposal that Ulster should have control of its own administration in regard to local affairs, but that Irish legislation should be left to a common parliament.

This plan Sir Edward Grey described as his "personal contribution" to a discussion of possibilities which had been inaugurated by a notable speech from the Prime Minister. At Ladybank, on October 25th, Mr. Asquith invited "interchange of views and suggestions, free, frank, and without prejudice." Nothing, however, could be accepted which did not conform to three governing considerations. First, there must be established "a subordinate Irish legislature with an executive responsible to it"; secondly, "nothing must be done to erect a permanent and insuperable bar to Irish unity"; and thirdly, though the process of relieving congestion in the Imperial Parliament could not be fully accomplished by the present Bill, Ireland must not be made to wait till a complete scheme of decentralization could be carried out.

The second of these conditions was plainly the most significant. It was taken to mean that "county option"—the right for each county to decide whether it would come under a Home Rule Government—would not create "a permanent and insuperable" obstacle, since each county could be given the opportunity to vote itself in at any time. Redmond's next important speech in England showed by its emphasis that he felt a danger. He denounced "the gigantic game of bluff and black-mail" which was in progress. The proposed exclusion of Ulster was not a proposition that could be considered. It would bring about, he thought, the ruin of Ulster's prosperity. "For us it would mean the nullification of our hopes and aspirations for the future." It would stereotype an old evil in the region where it still existed.

What Ulster really feared, he said, was the loss, not of freedom or prosperity, but of Protestant ascendancy.

This was the truth ; Protestant ascendancy, which in his boyhood had existed throughout all Ireland, was in consequence of the Irish party's work dead in three provinces. It remained and must remain in Ulster, where Protestants were a majority, but it would be qualified if that region came under the control of a parliament elected by all Ireland. That was and is the true reason of Ulster's resistance to national self-government. What he would concede and what he would reject, Redmond indicated in general words : " There is no demand, however extravagant and unreasonable it may appear to us, that we are not ready carefully to consider, so long as it is consistent with the principle for which generations of our race have battled, the principle of a settlement based on the national self-government of Ireland. I shut no door to a settlement by consent, but . . . we will not be intimidated or bullied into a betrayal of our trust."

It was noted at that time that he had said nothing to rule out Sir Edward Grey's proposal, which would have left the local majority predominant in Ulster's own affairs ; and on December 4th Sir Edward Grey spoke again, showing a firmness that was the more impressive because of his habitual moderation of tone. One thing, he said, was worse than carrying Home Rule by force, and that would be the abandonment of Home Rule. Two suggestions had been made—a proposal for the temporary exclusion of Ulster and a plan for giving to Ulster administrative autonomy. Neither had been received by Ulster " in a spirit which seemed likely to lead to a settlement. . . . Was it a settlement by consent they wanted, or was their aim simply the destruction of the Bill ? "

This emphasized what Redmond had said a few days earlier at Birmingham, when he declared that the fight against Home Rule was not an honest one, that its real

purpose was to defeat the Parliament Act and restore to the Tory party its special control over the legislative machine.

The facts were plain on the surface. The Tories clamoured for a fresh general election, urging that the electors never realized that the Liberal programme involved civil war. But to concede this claim indirectly defeated the Parliament Act, which would then have broken down at the first attempt to apply it. What added to the insincerity of the argument was Ulster's repeated refusal to be influenced by the result of any election. Under no circumstances, speaker after speaker from Ulster declared, would they submit to Home Rule. The prospect of civil war remained, with only one limitation. Mr. Bonar Law undertook that if a general election took place and the Liberals again came back, the British Unionist party would not support Ulster in physical resistance. They would, however, continue to oppose a Home Rule Bill by all constitutional means.

Nevertheless, the English disposition to compromise was already operating. Mr. Asquith was the last of mankind to make a quixotic stand for principle, and the most disposed to pride himself on a practical recognition of realities. His Government was in rough water. During the summer Mr. Lloyd George's transaction in Marconi shares had been magnified by partisan rancour into a crime. Much more serious was the split with Labour, which led to the loss of seat after seat at by-elections, when the allied forces which stood behind the Parliament Act attacked each other and let the Tories in. The Women's Franchise agitation was also coming to its stormiest point.

Redmond's part was one of extraordinary difficulty. The cause for which he stood was one affecting the interests of only a small minority of the total electorate concerned in the struggle which now spread over both islands. The Irish problem belonged in reality to the Victorian era ;



those in the British electorate whom it could stir to enthusiasm were stirred by a memory, not by a new gospel. Normally, but for the chance of Parnell's overthrow, it would have been solved in Gladstone's last years. For most Liberals, for all Labour men, the fact that it had passed beyond the sphere of argument meant a lack of driving force. It was a part of accepted Liberal orthodoxy; minds were centred rather on those social controversies in which Mr. Lloyd George was the dominant figure, and upon which opinion had not yet crystallized.

Further, the cry of Protestant liberties in danger, the cause of Protestants who conducted their arming to the accompaniment of hymns and prayer, made inevitably a searching appeal to the feelings of an island kingdom where the prejudice against Roman Catholics is more instinctive than anywhere else in the world. Looking back on it all, I marvel not at the difficulties we encountered, but at the success with which we surmounted them; and the great element in that success was Redmond's personality. His dignity, his noble eloquence, his sincerity, and the large, tolerant nature of the man, won upon the public imagination. His tact was unfailing. In all those years, under the most envenomed scrutiny, he never let slip a word that could be used to our disadvantage. This is merely a negative statement. It is truer to say that he never touched the question without raising it to the scope of great issues. Nothing petty, nothing personal came into his discourse; he so carried the national claim of Ireland that men saw in it at once the test and the justification of democracy.

That is why the Irish cause, instead of being a millstone round the neck of the parliamentary alliance, was in truth a living cohesive force. But in order to keep it so it must be pleaded, not as a question for Ireland only but for the democracy of Great Britain and, in a still larger sense, for the Commonwealth of the British Empire.



Liberal statesmen in their desire to simplify their own task underestimated altogether the difficulty which their professed short-cuts to the goal—or rather, their attempted circuits round obstacles—created inevitably for the Irish leader. They did not realize that his genuine feeling—based on knowledge—for the British democracy at home, and still more for its offshoots overseas, was unshared by his countrymen, still aloof, still suspicious, and daily impressed by the spectacle of those who most paraded allegiance to British Imperialism professing a readiness to tear up the Constitution rather than allow freedom to Ireland. Liberal statesmen did not understand that Redmond could only justify to Ireland the part which he was taking if he won, and that he and not they must be the judge of what Ireland would consider a defeat. In all probability, also, they overrated his power and that of the party which he led. They did not guess at the potency of new forces which only in these months began to make themselves felt, and which in the end, breaking loose from Redmond's control, undid his work. A new phase in Irish history had begun, of which Sir Edward Carson was the chief responsible author.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE RIVAL VOLUNTEER FORCES

THE first stir of a new movement in Nationalist Ireland outside the old political lines came from Labour—from Irish Labour, as yet unorganized and terribly in need of organization. On August 26, 1913, a strike in Dublin began under the leadership of Mr. Larkin. It had all the violence and disorder which is characteristic of economic struggles where Labour has not yet learned to develop its strength; it opened new cleavages at this moment when national union was most necessary: it was fought with the passion of despair by workers whose scale of pay and living was a disgrace to civilization; and after five months it was not settled but scotched, leaving dark embers of revolutionary hate scattered through the capital of Ireland.

One incident showed some of the consequences ready to spring, even in England itself, from the action taken in Ulster. Mr. Larkin at the end of October 1913 was sentenced to six months' imprisonment for sedition and inciting to disturbance. A fierce outcry ran through the Labour world in Great Britain; by-elections were in progress, and Government was angrily challenged with having one law for the rich and another for the poor, one law for Labour and another for the Unionist party. To this pressure Government yielded, and Mr. Larkin was liberated after a few days in jail.

But in Ireland more formidable symptoms soon made themselves manifest. Captain J. R. White, son of Sir George White, the defender of Ladysmith, was a soldier by hereditary instinct and had won the Distinguished

Service Order in South Africa. But some strain in his composition answered to other calls, and upon Tolstoyan grounds he ceased to be a soldier, without ceasing to be a natural leader of men. His first public appearance was at a meeting in London in support of Home Rule addressed by a number of prominent persons who were not Roman Catholics. But his interests were plainly not so much Nationalist as broadly humanitarian; freedom for the individual soul rather than for the nation was his object: and he suddenly enrolled himself among Mr. Larkin's allies. His proposal was outlined to a great assembly of the strikers gathered in front of Liberty Hall: Mr. Larkin set it out. They must no longer be "content to assemble in hopeless haphazard crowds" but must "agree to bring themselves under the influences of an ordered and sympathetic discipline." "Labour in its own defence must begin to train itself to act with disciplined courage and with organized and concentrated force. How could they accomplish this? By taking a leaf out of the book of Carson. If Carson had permission to train his braves of the North to fight against the aspirations of the Irish people, then it was legitimate and fair for Labour to organize in the same militant way to preserve their rights and to ensure that if they were attacked they would be able to give a very satisfactory account of themselves."

Thus began in a small sectional manner a national movement which led far indeed. Mr. O'Cathasaigh, from whose *Story of the Irish Citizen Army* I quote, attributes the failure of that purely Labour organization chiefly to the establishment of the Irish Volunteers.

This was a development which Redmond on his part neither willed nor approved, yet one which in the circumstances was inevitable. Who could suppose that the formation of combatant forces would remain a monopoly of any party? There was no mistaking the weight which a hundred thousand Ulster Volunteers, drilled

and regimented, threw into Sir Edward Carson's advocacy. As early as September 1913, during the parliamentary recess, Redmond received at least one letter—and possibly he received many—urging him to raise the standard of a similar force, and pointing out that if he did not take this course it might be taken by others less fit to guide it. The letter of which I speak elicited no answer. It was never his habit to reply to inconvenient communications—a policy which he inherited from Parnell, who held that nearly every letter answered itself within six months, if it were let alone. Certainly in this case it so happened. Long before six months were up, facts had made argument superfluous.

Wisdom is easy after the event, and few would dispute now that the constitutional party ought either to have dissociated itself completely from the appeal to force, or to have launched and controlled it from the outset. Neither of these lines was followed, and the responsibility for what was done and what was not done must lie with Redmond. Yet, as I read it, the key to his policy lay in a dread, not of war, but of civil war. To arm Irishmen against each other was of all possible courses to him the most hateful. It opened a vision of fratricidal strife, of an Ireland divided against itself by new and bloody memories.

Moreover, though he had, as the world came to know, soldiering in his blood—though the call to war, when he counted the war righteous, stirred what was deepest in him—by training and conviction he was essentially a constitutionalist: he realized profoundly how strong were the forces behind constitutionalism in Great Britain, how impregnable was the position of British Ministers if they boldly asserted the law with equality as between man and man. Where he was mistaken was in his estimate of the Government with which he had to deal, and especially of Mr. Asquith. Speaking to his constituents early in the New Year of 1914 he said, "The Prime

Minister is as firm as a rock, and is, I believe, the strongest and sanest man who has appeared in British politics in our time." The verdict of history might have borne out this judgment had Mr. Asquith never been forced to face extraordinary times. In the event, it was Mr. Asquith's lack of firmness and failure in strength which drove Redmond into belated acceptance of a policy modelled on Sir Edward Carson's.

As early as July 1913 the demonstrations in Ulster led to discussion of a countermove among young men in Dublin. But there was no public proposal, until at the end of October Professor MacNeill, Vice-President of the Gaelic League, published an article in the League's official organ calling on Nationalist Ireland to drill and arm. The first meeting of a provisional committee followed a few days later. Support was asked from all sections of Nationalist opinion ; but, as a whole, members of the United Irish League and of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, who constituted the bulk of Redmond's following, refused to act. Still, about a third of the committee were supporters of the parliamentary party ; they included Professor Kettle, who was from 1906 to 1910 among its most brilliant members. It was, however, significant that the Lord Mayor, a prominent official Nationalist, refused the use of the Mansion House for a meeting at which it was proposed to start the enrolment of Irish Volunteers. As a result, the venue was changed to the Rotunda, and so great enthusiasm was shown that the Rink was used for the assembly. Even that did not suffice for half the gathering. Three overflow meetings were held, and four thousand men are said to have been enrolled that evening.

Yet the movement did not spread at once with rapidity. By the end of December recruits only amounted to ten thousand. For this two causes were answerable. The first was the honourable refusal of the committee to allow companies to be enrolled except according



to locality. They would have no sectional companies of Sinn Féin volunteers, of United Irish League Volunteers, of Hibernian Volunteers. All must mix equally in the ranks. The second was the fear of most Nationalists that by joining an organization with which the national leader was not identified they might weaken his hand. This operated, although the declared intention of the organization was to strengthen Redmond's position. At Limerick in January Pearse said: "In the Volunteer movement we are going to give Mr. Redmond a weapon which will enable him to enforce the demand for Home Rule."

Briefly, for several months the numbers of the new force did not show that the whole of Nationalist Ireland was in support of it. Ireland was waiting for a sign from Redmond, and it did not come. The events which literally drove Irish constitutional Nationalists into following Ulster's example had still to occur.

There was, however, a wide extension of the cadres of the organization, and it was being spread by men some of whom—like Professor MacNeill—dissented from Redmond's attitude of quiescence, while some were general opponents of the whole constitutional policy. They covered the country with committees, recruited, it is true, from all sections of Nationalist Ireland. But it was inevitable that the element who distrusted Redmond, and whose distrust he reciprocated, should attain an influence out of all proportion to its following in the country.

Government's action—and this sentence will run like a refrain through the rest of this book—contributed largely to strengthen the extremists and to weaken Redmond's hold on the people. During eleven months the Ulster Volunteers had been drilling, had been importing arms, and no step was taken to interfere. Within ten days after the Irish Volunteer Force began to be enrolled, a proclamation (issued on December 4, 1913)

prohibited the importation of military arms and ammunition into Ireland. A system of search was instituted. But the Ulstermen were already well supplied. Redmond was blamed for not forcing the withdrawal of the proclamation. He controlled the House of Commons, it was said. This was the line of argument constantly taken by dissentient Nationalists; and it was true that he could at any moment put the Government out. Critics did not stop to ask for whose advantage that would be. Government by issuing this proclamation had effected no good: they had embarrassed their chief ally, and they had laid the foundation for an imposing structure of incidents which grew with pernicious rapidity into a monumental proof that law, even under a Liberal administration, has one aspect for Protestant Ulster and quite another for the rest of Ireland.

But in England at the beginning of the fateful year 1914 the Irish Volunteers had not yet become recognized as a factor in the main political situation. An attitude of mind had been studiously fostered which found crude expression soon after the House met. One of the Liberal party was arguing that Ulster had made Home Rule an absolute necessity, because Nationalists would have "fourfold justification if they resisted in the way you have taught them to resist the Government of this country in maintaining the old system." "They have not the pluck," interjected Captain Craig, the most prominent of the Ulster members. The present Lord Chancellor, Mr. F. E. Smith, was voluble in declarations that Nationalists would "neither fight for Home Rule nor pay for Home Rule." These taunts did not ease Redmond's position, especially as it became plain that Ulster's threat of violence had succeeded.

Mr. Asquith, referring to the "conversations" between leaders which had taken place during the winter, said that since no definite agreement had been reached the Government had decided to reopen the matter in the

House. This meant, as Redmond pointed out with some asperity, that the Prime Minister had accepted responsibility for taking the initiative in making proposals to meet objections whose reasonableness he did not admit. The Opposition, he thought, should have been left to put forward some plan.

Yet Redmond's attitude, and the attitude of the House, was considerably affected by an unusual speech which had been delivered by the Ulster leader.

Sir Edward Carson, as everyone knows, is not an Ulsterman, and the chief of many advantages which Ulster gained from his advocacy was that Ulster's case was never stated to Great Britain as Ulstermen themselves would have stated it. It is not true to say that Ulstermen by habit think of Ireland as consisting of two nations, for all Ulstermen traditionally regard themselves as Irish and so have always described themselves without qualification. But it is true to say that Ulster Protestants have regarded Irish Catholics as a separate and inferior caste of Irishmen. The belief has been ingrained into them that as Protestants they are morally and intellectually superior to those of the other religion. Their whole political attitude is determined by this conviction. They refuse to come under a Dublin Parliament because in it they would be governed by a majority whom they regard as their inferiors. It is in their deliberate view natural that Roman Catholics should submit to be controlled by Protestants, unnatural that Protestants should submit to be controlled by Roman Catholics.

It does not express the truth to say that Sir Edward Carson was adroit enough to avoid putting this view of the case to the electors of Great Britain or to the House of Commons. Temperamentally and instinctively, he did not share it. He was a Southern Irishman who at the opening of his life held himself, as not one Ulsterman in a thousand does, perfectly free to make up his mind for or against the maintenance of the Union. He reached

the conclusion not only that Home Rule would be disastrous for Ireland, for the United Kingdom, and for the British Empire, but that it would mean for Irishmen the acceptance of an inferior status in the Empire. As citizens of the United Kingdom, he held, they were more honourably situated than they could be as citizens of an Irish State within the Empire. This was an attitude of mind which Ulster could endorse, although it did not fully represent Ulster's conviction: but this was the case which Sir Edward Carson always made on behalf of Ulster, and he made it as an Irishman whose personal interests and connections lay in the South of Ireland, not in the North. His argument was the more persuasive because it was based on a view of Ireland's true interest—not of Ulster's only; and it was the harder on that account for Redmond to repel peremptorily. More than this, between him and Redmond there was an old personal tie. The Irish Bar is a true centre of intercourse between men of varying political and religious beliefs, and as junior barristers Edward Carson and John Redmond went the Munster circuit together.

All this lay behind the appeal which on February 11, 1914, was implied rather than expressed in the novel phrase and still more unaccustomed tone of a consummate orator.

"Believe me," Sir Edward Carson said, "whatever way you settle the Irish question" (and that phrase threw over the cry of "No Home Rule"), "there are only two ways to deal with Ulster. It is for statesmen to say which is the best and right one. She is not a part of the community which can be bought. She will not allow herself to be sold. You must therefore either coerce her if you go on, or you must in the long run, by showing that good government can come under the Home Rule Bill, try and win her over to the case of the rest of Ireland. You probably can coerce her—though I doubt it. If you do, what will be the disastrous conse-



quences not only to Ulster, but to this country and the Empire? Will my fellow-countryman"—and at this emphatic word, which jettisoned absolutely the theory of two nations, the speaker turned to his left, where Redmond sat in his accustomed place below the gangway—"will my fellow-countryman, the leader of the Nationalist Party, have gained anything? I will agree with him—I do not believe he wants to triumph any more than I do. But will he have gained anything if he takes over these people and then applies for what he used to call—at all events his party used to call—the enemies of the people to come in and coerce them into obedience? No, sir; one false step taken in relation to Ulster will, in my opinion, render for ever impossible a solution of the Irish question. I say this to my Nationalist fellow-countrymen, and, indeed, also to the Government: you have never tried to win over Ulster. You have never tried to understand her position. You have never alleged, and can never allege, that this Bill gives her one atom of advantage."

Then, carried away by the course of his argument, an angry note came into his voice, and before a minute had passed we were back in the old atmosphere. He accused us of wanting "not Ulster's affections but her taxes."

Well might Redmond say when he rose that Sir Edward Carson had been heard by all of us with very mixed feelings. "I care not about the assent of Englishmen," he said; "I am fighting this matter out between a fellow-countryman and myself, and I say that it was an unworthy thing for him to say that I am animated by these base motives, especially after he had lectured the House on the undesirability of imputing motives."

On the personal note Redmond was to the full as effective as his opponent, and his speech of that day was memorable. It was also very much more to the taste of the Liberal rank and file than what came from their own front bench. "We do not by any means



take the tragic view of the probabilities or even the possibilities of what is called civil war in Ulster," he said; and added that the House of Commons ought, in his opinion, "to resent as an affront these threats of civil war." Yet in the end he promised, for the sake of peace, "consideration in the friendliest spirit" (not very different from acceptance) of any proposals that the Government might feel called upon to put forward.

It is noteworthy that in this prolonged debate there was no reference to the new fact of a second volunteer force. But on February 12th a question was asked about it. On the 17th there was allusion to another growing element of danger—the discussions among officers of the Army of a combined refusal to serve against Ulster. All these factors must have weighed with Redmond and with his chief colleagues in their discussions with the Government during the next three weeks. "Friendly consideration" passed into acceptance on March 9th, when Mr. Asquith, introducing the Home Rule Bill for its passage in the third consecutive session (as required by the Parliament Act), outlined the proposed modifications in it. They involved partition. But the exclusion was to be optional by areas and limited in time.

The proposal to take a vote by counties had, it will be remembered, been originally suggested by Mr. Bonar Law, and in following the Prime Minister he could not well repudiate it. The test, however, which he now put forward was whether or not the proposals satisfied Ulster: and he fixed upon the time-limit of six years as being wholly unacceptable. Redmond, on the other hand, while declaring that the Government had gone to "the extremest limits of concession," said that the proposals had one merit: they would "elicit beyond doubt or question by a free ballot the real opinion of the people of Ulster." This indicated his conviction that if Home Rule really came the majority in Ulster would prefer to take their chances under it; the proposal of exclusion being merely

a tactical manœuvre to defeat Home Rule by splitting the Nationalists.

Its efficacy for that purpose was immediately demonstrated. Mr. O'Brien followed Redmond with a virulent denunciation of "the one concession of all others which must be hateful and unthinkable from the point of view of any Nationalist in Ireland." Opposition from Mr. O'Brien and from Mr. Healy was no new thing. But by acceptance of these proposals the Nationalist leader made their opposition for the first time really formidable. Telegrams rained in that March afternoon—above all on Mr. Devlin, from his supporters in Belfast, who felt themselves betrayed and shut out from a national triumph which they had been the most zealous to promote. From this time onward the position of Redmond personally and of his party as a whole was perceptibly weakened. Especially an alienation began between him and the Catholic hierarchy. It was impossible that the clergy should be well disposed towards proposals which, as Mr. Healy put it, would make Cardinal Logue a foreigner in his own cathedral at Armagh.

Yet upon the whole the shake to Redmond's power was less than might have been expected—largely, no doubt, because the offer was repelled. Sir Edward Carson described it as "sentence of death with stay of execution for six years." With a great advocate's instinct, he fastened on the point in the Government's proposal which was least defensible.

In my opinion these modifications of the Bill were never adequately discussed in the meetings of the Irish party. All was done between the Government and Redmond's inner cabinet, consisting of Redmond himself, Mr. Dillon, Mr. Devlin and Mr. T. P. O'Connor. The negotiations were most delicate and difficult, and above all secrecy is hard to maintain when a body of over seventy men, each keenly concerned for the view of his constituents, comes to be consulted. Yet I think it a pity

that the party never thrashed this question out. Once the principle of option was admitted, a great deal had to be considered. Voting must be a referendum either to the province as a whole, to the constituencies separately, or to local units of administration. A referendum by constituencies was as impossible as one by parishes: for instance, Mr. Devlin's West Belfast, out of the city's four divisions, would certainly have voted to remain under the Irish Parliament, and an absurd situation would have resulted. The choice lay between a vote by counties or by the province as a whole. In the province, three counties out of nine were as predominantly Nationalist as any part of Leinster. In two others, Tyrone and Fermanagh, Nationalists were about 55 per cent. of the electorate. But the bulk of the population of Ulster resided in four counties of the north-east, so that Protestants over the whole province had a majority of some two hundred thousand. An appeal to the province, therefore, might involve the exclusion from Home Rule of a very large area which was thoroughly Nationalist. On the other hand, every scheme of exclusion had in view the possibility of the excluded area changing its mind on the question after a short trial. To separate the four overwhelmingly Protestant counties was to set up a body in which a change of vote would be much harder to bring about than in the province. As a matter of statesmanship there was much to be said for closing with the Ulstermen's original demand that the province should come in or stay out as a whole. It satisfied Ulster's sentiment and lessened the chances of crystallizing a Protestant block of excluded territory, which would tend to become less and less Irish.

The answer to this was that Nationalists would never consent and did never consent to the possibility of permanent exclusion for any part. Insistence on the time-limit was from this point of view a matter of absolute principle. Yet many believed then, and believe now,

that if any part of Ulster were excluded by legislation it would certainly come in voluntarily after a short period. On the other hand, if any part were excluded even for a year, it was difficult to believe that it could ever be brought in except by its own consent. The view, however, to which we were committed (with the party's general approval), was expressed by Redmond at the customary St. Patrick's Day Nationalist banquet in London.

"To agree to the permanent partition of Ireland would be," he said, "an outrage upon nature and upon history." He quoted a phrase used by Mr. Austen Chamberlain, who had described it as "the statutory negation of Ireland's national claim." But, he argued, no such sacrifice of principle had been made. The demand of Nationalists was for a Parliament for the whole of Ireland, having power to deal with "every purely Irish matter." Temporary limitations of this demand had already been accepted.

"We have agreed, as Parnell agreed in the Bill of 1886, and as we all agreed in the Bill of 1893, that the power of dealing with some of the most vital of Irish questions should not come within the purview of the new Parliament for a definite number of years." The control of police, for instance, was reserved to the Imperial Parliament in all those Bills for a term of years. But this did not mean that Parnell or we abandoned Ireland's right to manage her own police. Reservation of the police in perpetuity would have been impossible to accept. In the same way, said Redmond, "the automatic ending of any period of exclusion is for us a fixed and immutable principle."

To maintain this conformity with national sentiment great advantages were sacrificed. The whole debates of this period turned on the question of the time-limit. If it had never been raised, opposition would still have existed, but the fact would have been plain from the



outset that Protestant Ulster claimed to dictate not only where it had the majority, but where the majority was against it. Redmond probably believed that the opinion of Nationalists in the North could not be brought to consent to abandonment of the time-limit. If so, he probably underrated, then as always, the influence he possessed. It is always easy to persuade Irishmen that if you are going to do a thing you should do it "decently." What is more, a real effect could have been produced on much moderate opinion in Ulster by saying to Ulster: "Stay out if you like, and come in when you like. When you come in, you will be more than welcome." But the decision for this course would have needed to be taken before the proposals were made, since any attempt to enlarge them was bound to renew and intensify the inevitable storm of Nationalist dissent. Whatever the proposal, it should have been absolutely the last word of concession.

If a clear proposal of local option by counties without time-limit had been put before Parliament and the electorate, I do not think our position in Ireland would have been worse than it was made by the proposal of temporary exclusion, and it would have been greatly strengthened in Parliament and in the United Kingdom. All moderate men, and many pronounced Unionists, were becoming uneasy under the perpetual menace of trouble. Events which now followed rapidly turned the uneasiness into grave anxiety, but did not turn it to the profit of the Government.

The policy which was adopted in Mr. Asquith's proposal of March 9th was the policy which Mr. Churchill had pushed from the first introduction of the Home Rule Bill, even when it was formally disavowed by the Prime Minister. Contemptuous rejection of it by the Ulstermen when it was proposed was not calculated to strengthen Mr. Churchill's personal position, or to soothe his temper, and on March 14th he made a speech at Bradford which



very greatly stirred public feeling. If Ulster really rejects the offer, said Mr. Churchill, "it can only be because they prefer shooting to voting and the bullet to the ballot." Should civil war break out in Ulster, the issue would not be confined to Ireland: the issue would be whether civil and parliamentary government in these realms was to be beaten down by the menace of armed force. Bloodshed was lamentable, but there were worse things. If the law could not prevail, if the veto of violence was to replace the veto of privilege, then, said the orator, "let us go forward and put these grave matters to a proof."

When Mr. Churchill next appeared in the House of Commons, a great outburst of cheering showed what a volume of feeling had found expression in his speech. Redmond came to the St. Patrick's Day banquet under the impression of that scene, and he spoke with a confidence which gives to his words a tragic irony to-day. He cited "the superb speech of Mr. Churchill" as evidence that "what is our last word is also the last word of the Government."

"If the Opposition have spoken their last word," he said, "the Bill will now proceed upon its natural course. It will proceed rapidly and irresistibly, and in a few short weeks become the law of the land."

The weeks have lengthened into years, and so much has happened in them that I keep no clear memory of that evening, though I was present. But it represented the temper of the time, among Home Rulers, and more particularly among Irish Nationalists, who generally held the opinion that the military preparations in Ulster were, as Mr. Devlin called them, "a hollow masquerade."

We saw the other side of the picture on Thursday, March 19th, when a Vote of Censure was moved. Mr. Bonar Law launched on the House of Commons a new and sinister suggestion.

"What about the Army? If it is only a question of

disorder, the Army I am sure will obey you, and I am sure that it ought to obey you ; but if it really is a question of civil war, soldiers are citizens like the rest of us."

Sir Edward rose immediately the Prime Minister had replied to Mr. Bonar Law, and his speech was furious. "In consequence of the trifling with this subject by the Prime Minister and the provocation, which he has endorsed, by the First Lord of the Admiralty last Saturday, I feel I ought not to be here but in Belfast," he said ; and he indicated his intention of proceeding there as soon as he had spoken. What he had to say chiefly concerned the Army, and the preparations which were being made at the War Office for the despatch of troops to Ulster. He suggested that there was the intention to provoke an attack so that there might be "pretext for putting them down."

"You will be all right. You will be no longer cowards. The cowardice will have been given up. You will have become men in entrenching yourselves behind the Army. But under your direction they will have become assassins."

With these words—memorable in connection with what happened later, but not in Ulster—the Ulster leader left the House, followed by Captain Craig. Friday's papers were of course full of the debate. At noon on that day, March 20, 1914, General Sir Arthur Paget, Commander-in-Chief in Ireland, held a meeting with the officers at the Curragh and received the intimation that the majority of them would resign their commissions rather than go on duty which was likely to involve a collision with Ulster.

It seems only fair in dealing with this whole incident to print here an account of what happened, written from the soldier's point of view, by the man who was the spokesman and leader of the resigning officers—Brigadier (now Lieutenant) General Sir Hubert Gough.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, February 4, 1919

‘“I never refused to obey orders. On the contrary, I obeyed them. I was ordered to make a decision—namely, to leave the Army or ‘to undertake active operations against Ulster.’ These were the very words of the terms offered. As I was given a choice, I accepted it, and chose the first alternative, and as a matter of fact I have a letter in existence written the night before the offer was made by Sir A. Paget to my brother, saying: ‘Something is up’ (we had been suddenly ordered to a conference). ‘What is it? If I receive orders to march North, of course I will go.’”

‘All the officers of the 3rd Cavalry Brigade took the same line’ (continues the correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*) ‘and resigned. This decision seems not to have been expected by the authorities, and caused great perturbation. General Gough was urged by Sir Arthur Paget to withdraw the resignation. Sir Arthur Paget told them that the operations against Ulster were to be of a purely defensive nature. Unfortunately, Sir Arthur Paget based his appeal on expediency and private interest, and not sufficiently on the call of public duty. This failed to influence the officers. They persisted in their resignations, and only finally withdrew them on receiving a written undertaking from the War Office that they would not be again presented with the alternative of resigning or attacking Ulster.’

The Irish Party had no guess at the inner aspect of the occurrence. Naturally, but regrettably, we were the section of the House which had least touch with what was thought and felt in barrack-rooms and regimental messes. Naturally, but most regrettably, the opinion of the Army regarded us traditionally as a hostile body; and at this time every effort to accentuate that belief was made by the political party with which the Army had most intercourse and connection.

Writing now, as I hope I may write without offence, of a state of things not far off in time, but divided from us of to-day by the marks of a vast upheaval, it can be said that the old professional Army was a society governed in an extraordinary degree by tradition. Part of that

tradition was that the Army had no politics; and as everyone knows, the man who says he has no politics is in practice almost invariably a Conservative. In the Army, usage was at its strongest—stronger even than at a public school; it was almost bad manners, “bad form,” to hold political opinions differing from those of your mess. Political discussion was sharply discouraged; but this never meant that a man might not express vehemently the prevailing opinion. On the broad facts it was inevitable that the prevailing opinion should be unfriendly to Irish Nationalists. Irish Nationalists had taken passionately the line of opposition to the South African War; they had been sharply critical of all the minor campaigns in which the Army had been engaged for repression or for conquest during the whole period since Parnell began his leadership. In Ireland itself, every man who reflected for a moment saw at the Curragh the very embodiment of that force which had maintained for over a hundred years a Government which had not the consent of the governed; and unless he was one of those who regarded themselves as “England’s faithful garrison in Ireland,” protestations of enthusiasm for the armed forces of the Crown could not be the natural expression of his feelings.

Yet mingled with the Nationalists’ attitude of estrangement from the forces which upheld a detested system of government there was a deep-seated pride in the exploits of Irish troops; and no man ever felt this more strongly than Redmond. He seldom spoke of the distinguished men he met, but again and again I remember hearing him mention with pleasure some talk over a dinner-table with this or that famous soldier—Sir John French (as he then was), for instance. It was happiness for him to find himself on friendly terms with the service to which so many sentiments bound him. The Curragh incident was to him more than a grave political event; it pained him beyond measure that this opposition should be



headed by a representative of one of the Irish families most famous for their military record. In the debates which dealt with all this matter he said no word, and he kept our party silent—a wise course, and one to which every instinct prompted him.

In its political aspect, this action of General Gough and the fifty officers allied with him revealed a new and formidable impediment on the path to Home Rule; yet it was one of those barriers which rally forces rather than weaken them, and in surmounting which, or sweeping them aside, a new impetus may be gained. The incident was first discussed in the House on Monday, March 23rd, and continued to dominate all other questions for several days. From the Labour benches Mr. John Ward (now Colonel), who had been a private soldier, gave the first indication of the volume of resentment. His speech, remarkable in its power both of phrasing and of thought, was delivered quite unexpectedly in a thin House; but its effect was electrical. Later, Mr. J. H. Thomas spoke in the same strain. When a railway strike was threatened, the soldiers had been called out and had come without a murmur. Was the Army to be used against all movements except those under the patronage of the Tory party? If so, he would tell his four hundred thousand railway men to equip themselves to defend their own interests.

These speeches set people thinking very gravely, but their effect was to increase the confidence of Home Rulers—the more so as Sir Edward Grey, in one of his rare moments of emphasis, declared his determination to go as far as either speaker if the case which they foreshadowed should arise. But new occurrences disquieted the public; the bungling which had characterized dealings with the officers at the Curragh was not ended there. General Gough received a document from Colonel Seely, Secretary of State for War, countersigned by Sir John French and Sir Spencer Ewart, the military heads of



the War Office ; and this document was in part disavowed by the Cabinet. The two Generals resigned and Colonel Seely followed their example. I have never seen the House of Commons so completely surprised as on the afternoon when the Prime Minister announced that he himself would succeed to the vacant office. The surprise passed at once into a feeling of immense relief, very widely shared by all parties. The right thing had been done in the right way, and it was clear that Mr. Asquith possessed enormous authority, if he chose to assert it.

The effect of all these happenings was immediately perceptible in the resumed discussion on the Home Rule Bill. Mr. Dillon, speaking on the second day, said : "Yesterday for the first time I heard this question debated in a spirit of reasonableness and conciliation and with an evident desire on both sides to reach an agreement." A proposal frequently put forward from the Tory side suggested exclusion until a federal arrangement for the United Kingdom could be completed. The official Tory demand was for either a referendum or a general election. But, as Redmond pointed out when he spoke on the fourth and last day of the debate, any proposal for a settlement must be a settlement which Ulster would accept, and Ulster declared that it would not be influenced by any vote of the British people or by any Act of Parliament. In a passage of very genuine feeling he indicated what Ulster might do to assist him in securing for Ulster the extremest limit of concession :

"Anything which would mean burying the hatchet, anything which would mean the consent of these Ulstermen to shake hands frankly with their fellow-countrymen across the hateful memories of the past, would be welcomed with universal joy in Ireland, and would be gladly purchased by very large sacrifices indeed. If the right honourable and learned gentleman (Sir Edward Carson) would say to me, 'We are both Irishmen ; we both love our country ; we both hate—and I am sure this is

absolutely true of both of us—we both hate all the old sectarian animosities, all the old wrongs, all the old memories which have kept Irishmen apart; let us come together and see what we can do for the welfare of our common country, so that we can hand down to those who come after us an Ireland more free, more peaceful, more tolerant, an Ireland less cursed by racial and religious differences'; if an appeal like that were made to me, I say without the smallest hesitation that there are no lengths that Nationalist Ireland would not be willing to go to assuage the fears, allay the anxieties, and remove the prejudices of their Ulster fellow-countrymen.

"But, alas! that is not the position. Even the permanent exclusion of Ulster is not put forward as the price of reconciliation; it is simply put forward as the one and sole condition upon which they will give up their avowed intention of levying war upon their fellow-countrymen."

He dealt with the federal proposal, and once more avowed his desire for that solution. "I have been all my political life preaching in favour of federalism." But he could not consent that the exclusion of Ulster should be prolonged indefinitely pending a settlement on federal lines, nor consent to any "watering down of the powers in the present Home Rule Bill."

What remained then, if Ulster would not accept the offer? Nothing but "to proceed calmly with the Bill." Threats of civil war he discounted. Disturbances there would probably be; but when the first Home Rule Bill was defeated, there were weeks of the most terrible riots in Belfast. The House could not afford to be deterred from any course by threats of violence; and he was confident that the Bill would pass into law and profoundly confident it would never be revoked.

He gave his reasons for that confidence in a passage almost autobiographical in character—if only because it made the House realize how completely this man's

whole adult life had been devoted to this one long service, and how far the labours of our party had achieved their purpose.

“In a sense I may say I have lived my whole life within these walls. I came in here little more than a boy, and I have grown old in the House of Commons, and in the long space of years which have passed since then I have witnessed the most extraordinary transformation of the whole public life of this country, and I have witnessed an almost miraculous change in the position and the prospects of the Irish National Cause. When I came to this House, Irish Nationalist members, in a sense, were almost outcasts. Both the great British parties—there was no Labour party then—divided on everything else, were united in hostility to the national movement and the national ideal. Home Rule seemed hopelessly out of the range of practical politics. There were only a handful of men in this whole House of Commons besides us who were in favour of any measure of Home Rule for Ireland. Outside, the public opinion of this country was ignorant, and it was actively hostile, and we found it impossible to gain the ear of the democracy of England for the voice of Ireland. All that has vanished into thin air. All that has radically changed. The change has been slow and gradual, but it has been continuous and sure. Such a change as that can never be reversed. You might as well talk of the world going back to the days before electricity or petrol as hope to bring back the prejudices and the ignorance of the masses of the people in this country about Ireland, as they existed in the past.”

His confidence was strong and it communicated itself to Ireland. But whatever could be said to shake confidence was said by Mr. O'Brien and Mr. Healy, who denounced the Bill as worthless when linked to the plan of even temporary partition, and declared that, whatever the Government might say at present, we had not yet

reached the end of their concessions. On the division they and their party abstained, so that the majority dropped to 77.

Up to this point it is still true to say that the Nationalist party were constant to their faith in strictly constitutional action. But a new development was imminent. On the night of Friday to Saturday, April 24th-25th, Ulstermen brought off their first overt act of rebellion. They seized the ports of Larne and Donaghadee, cut off telephone and telegraph, landed a very large quantity of rifles and ammunition, and despatched them to every quarter of the province by means of a great fleet of motor-cars which had been mobilized for the occasion. It was a clean and excellent piece of staff work, planned by a capable soldier and carried out under military direction: and the Tory Press hailed it with no less enthusiasm than was elicited by the most important victories in the recent war.

One coastguard, running to give the alarm, died of heart failure: otherwise there was no casualty. The police and customs officers were confronted with *force majeure* and submitted without show of resistance. The Prime Minister, in answering a question as to the action which he proposed to take, used these words:

"In view of this grave and unprecedented outrage the House may be assured that His Majesty's Government will take without delay appropriate steps to vindicate the authority of the law and protect officers and servants of the King and His Majesty's subjects in the exercise of their legal rights."

The Opposition was noticeably silent, and next day some embarrassment was apparent when they proceeded with a previously arranged Vote of Censure on the Government for the military and naval movements in connection with which the Curragh incident had occurred. The sum of these movements amounted to despatching four companies to points in Ulster at which very large



stores of arms and ammunition were lying under very small guard—and at one of which there was a battery of field guns with no protecting infantry. It was regarded as at least possible that the stores might be rushed by “evil-disposed persons, not fully under the control of their leaders.” It was also regarded as possible that the movement of these companies might be resisted and that much larger operations might be thereby involved. The stationing of the Fleet opposite the Belfast coast was part of the measures taken against this latter contingency.

All this preparation was denounced as a conspiracy organized by Mr. Churchill with intent to provoke rebellion and put it down by a massacre. In view of the important military operation which Ulster had just carried out against the Crown, Mr. Churchill was not without justification in comparing the motion to a vote of censure by the criminal classes on the police. Yet, after much hard hitting in speech, he once more led the way in retreat from the Government’s position. Sir Edward Grey had declared, speaking for the Government, that beyond the six years’ limit they could not go. Mr. Churchill himself had declared the Government’s offer would be and should be their last word. Yet now, avowedly on his own account, and not speaking for the Cabinet, he proposed that a new negotiation should be opened with Sir Edward Carson.

This proposal elicited no response, and the debate continued that day in a line of violent recrimination. But next day Sir Edward Carson rose and affirmed that he had previously declared his willingness to advise Ulster to close with a proposal giving exclusion until a Federal scheme had been considered, when the whole matter should be reviewed “in the light of the action of the Irish Parliament and how they got on.” Now he said :

“I shall try to make an advance on what I said before.



I will say this—and I hope the House will believe me, because, though I do not want to be introducing my own personality into it, I am myself a southerner in Ireland—I would say this : That if Home Rule is to pass, much as I detest it, and little as I will take any responsibility for the passing of it, my earnest hope, and indeed I would say my most earnest prayer, would be that the Government of Ireland for the South and West would prove, and might prove, such a success in the future, notwithstanding all our anticipations, that it might be even for the interest of Ulster itself to move towards that Government, and come in under it and form one unit in relation to Ireland. May I say something more than that ? I would be glad to see such a state of things arising in Ireland, in which you would find that mutual confidence and goodwill between all classes in Ireland as would lead to a stronger Ireland as an integral unit in the federal scheme. While I say all that, that depends upon goodwill, and never can be brought about by force.”

Redmond remained silent ; but months later it became known that he had taken action to foster this new spirit. He advised the Prime Minister not to proceed with the prosecution which had been threatened against the Larne gun-runners. But at the same time he urged upon Government that they should withdraw the proclamation against importing arms : and for this he had good reason. The Larne affair had rendered the movement in support of the Irish Volunteers irresistible, and Redmond had decided to throw himself in with it.

The result was an amazing upward leap in the numbers of the Volunteers. On June 15th a question brought out that they were estimated at 80,000 against 84,000 of the Ulster force ; but the Nationalist body was increasing at the rate of 15,000 a week. By July 9th they were reckoned (on police information) at 132,000, of whom nearly forty thousand were Army reservists.

These facts now dominated the situation. It was now abundantly clear that if passing Home Rule meant civil war, so also would the abandonment of Home Rule. On June 16th Lord Robert Cecil raised a debate on the new danger. In that debate words were quoted from Sir Roger Casement, one of the most active promoters of the movement: "When you are challenged on the field of force, it is upon that field you must reply." Mr. Dillon, who exulted in the "splendid demonstration of national sentiment shown in the uprising of the National Volunteers," urged strongly that the growth of a rival body was not a menace to public order but an added security. The armed Ulstermen would be "much slower to break the peace" when they realized the certainty of formidable resistance—and this, be it said, was no ungrounded observation. Yet at the same time the very success of the Volunteer movement was disquieting Redmond. He was not in the same position as Sir Edward Carson, who from the first had directed, presided over, and controlled the raising and equipment of his force; and unless the force were to be a menace to his leadership, he must secure control. As Mr. Bulmer Hobson puts it in his *History of the Irish Volunteers*:

"The Volunteers had men in their ranks who were political followers of Mr. Redmond's, and men who were not, and who never had been. The latter were willing to help him if he had been ready to help them; they would have made terms with him, but were not prepared to be merely absorbed into his movement."

The strength of Redmond's position lay in the fact that the vast majority of the enrolled men looked to him as their leader: his weakness, in that the committees under which enrolment had taken place were largely composed of the extremist section. He now determined to unite the Volunteers with the parliamentary party as the Ulster Volunteers were linked with Sir Edward Carson and his civilian organization.

The men with whom he had to deal were principally Professor MacNeill and Sir Roger Casement. His first proposal was to replace the existing Provisional Committee by another, consisting of nine members, with Professor MacNeill, who was regarded as a general supporter of Redmond's, in the chair. Oddly enough, the negotiations broke down because Redmond nominated Michael Davitt's son along with Mr. Devlin and his own brother to be representatives. The young Davitt had at an early stage expressed dissent from the movement, and this, coming from his father's son, left bitter resentment. The existing Committee now proposed to call a National Convention of the Volunteers. Such a body would clearly have become a rival, and a powerful rival, to the National Convention of a purely citizen type, and Redmond felt himself forced to take drastic action. In a public letter dated June 9th he wrote :

“I regret to observe the controversy which is now taking place in the Press on the Irish National Volunteer movement. Many of the writers convey the impression that the Volunteer movement is, to some extent at all events, hostile to the objects and policy of the Irish party. I desire to say emphatically that there is no foundation for this idea, and any attempts to create discord between the Volunteer movement and the Irish party are calculated in my opinion to ruin the Volunteer movement, which, properly directed, may be of incalculable service to the National Cause.

“Up to two months ago I felt that the Volunteer movement was somewhat premature, but the effect of Sir Edward Carson's threats upon public opinion in England, the House of Commons, and the Government ; the occurrences at the Curragh Camp, and the successful gun-running in Ulster, have vitally altered the position, and the Irish party took steps about six weeks ago to inform their friends and supporters in the country that in their opinion it was desirable to support the Volunteer

movement, with the result that within the last six weeks the movement has spread like a prairie fire, and all the Nationalists of Ireland will shortly be enrolled.

“Within the last fortnight I have had communications from men in all parts of the country, inquiring as to the organization and control of the Volunteer movement, and it has been strongly represented to me that the Governing Body should be reconstructed and placed on a thoroughly representative basis, so as to give confidence to all shades of National opinion.”

Redmond's proposal was that to the existing Committee there should be added twenty-five representative men from different parts of the country, nominated at the instance of the Irish party and in sympathy with its policy and aims. Failing this, he intimated that it would be “necessary to fall back on county control and government until the organization was sufficiently complete to make possible the election of a fully representative Executive by the Volunteers themselves.”

The intimation was not at once accepted. An order was issued calling on the Volunteers to elect additional representatives by counties to be added to the Committee. Redmond at once publicly declared that this amounted to refusal of his offer, and he put the issue very plainly. The Provisional Committee was originally self-constituted and had been increased only by co-option. The majority of its members, he was informed, were not supporters of the Irish party: of the rank and file at least 95 per cent., he said, were supporters of the Irish party and its policy.

“This is a condition of things which plainly cannot continue. The rank and file of the Volunteers and the responsible leaders of the Irish people are entitled, and indeed are bound, to demand some security that an attempt shall not be made in the name of the Volunteers to dictate policy to the National party, who, as the elected representatives of the people, are charged with



the responsibility of deciding upon the policy best calculated to bring the National movement to success.

“Moreover, a military organization is of its very nature so grave and serious an undertaking that every responsible Nationalist in the country who supports it is entitled to the most substantial guarantees against any possible imprudence. The best guarantee to be found is clearly the presence on the Governing Body of men of proved judgment and steadiness.”

As a last word he renewed his threat of calling on his supporters to organize separate county committees independent of the Dublin centre. This was carrying matters with a high hand, and the fact that he succeeded proves the greatness of his prestige at the moment. The Committee in a published manifesto accepted his terms, but accepted them with declared regret, and eight of the original members seceded. Among them was Patrick Pearse, with whom went three others who suffered death in Easter week two years later.

All this was a disastrous business, and the worst part of it lay in the public avowal of divided councils. Moreover, a committee so constituted could not, and did not, operate efficiently. The original members were primarily interested in the Volunteer Force; the added ones primarily in the parliamentary movement. Nearly all of the latter—selected for their “proved judgment and steadiness”—were men past middle age; and of the whole twenty-five Willie Redmond alone subsequently bore arms.

There was indeed an underlying difference of principle. Redmond knew well, and all parliamentarians with him, that under the terms of the Home Rule Bill no army could be raised or maintained in Ireland without the consent of the Imperial Parliament. The original Volunteer Committee laid it down as an axiom that the Volunteer Force should be permanent; they were, as Casement put it, “the beginning of an Irish army.”



Sir Edward Carson's policy had produced a new mentality among Irish Nationalists, and it made many take Redmond's constitutionalism for timidity.

But in the eyes of the world and of Ireland generally, Redmond was just as much as Sir Edward Carson the accredited and accepted leader of his Volunteer organization, and to him the Volunteers looked for provision of arms and equipment. One of his chief preoccupations in those months was with this matter, and it explains his desire to have the proclamation against the import of arms withdrawn. The Larne exploit had proved the futility of it; articles by Colonel Repington in *The Times* testified to the completeness of the provision which had been made for Ulster. But smuggling is always a costly business, and Nationalists were hampered by the cost. More than that, there was ground for suspicion that the scales were not equally weighted as between Ulster and the rest of the country. On June 30th Redmond wrote a letter to the Chief Secretary repeating his case for withdrawal of the proclamation. It is all memorable, but especially the warning which concludes the following passages from it:

"In the South and West of Ireland, not only are the most active measures being taken against the importation of arms, but many owners of vessels are harassed unnecessarily.

"The effect of this unequal working of the proclamation has been grave amongst our people, and has tended to increase both their exasperation and their apprehensions.

"The apprehensions of our people are justified to the fullest. They find themselves, especially in the North, faced by a large, drilled, organized and armed body. Furthermore, the incident at the Curragh has given them the fixed idea that they cannot rely on the Army for protection. The possession of arms by Nationalists would, under these circumstances, be no provocation for disorder, but a means of preserving the peace by

confronting one armed force with another, not helpless but, by being armed, fully able to defend themselves.

“Finally, we want to call your most serious attention to the grave and imminent danger of a collision between Nationalists and the police in the effort to import arms. The police in the South and West might not be so passive as they were in the recent affair at Larne, and there might be serious conflicts, and even loss of life, and from this day forward every day which the proclamation is enforced as strictly as it is now against the Nationalists brings increased danger of disastrous collision between the police and the people.”

Within a fortnight a minor incident illustrated the “unequal working” referred to in the first of these points. General Richardson, who commanded the Ulster Force, had issued on July 1st an order authorizing all Ulster Volunteers to carry arms openly and to resist any attempt at interference. In Ulster accordingly no search was ever attempted. But on July 15th Mr. Lawrence Kettle, brother to Professor Kettle, who had from the first been a prominent official of the Volunteers, was returning in his motor from the electric works at the Pigeon House; he was stopped by the police and his car searched for arms. Such an occurrence in Ulster would have been held to justify immediate rebellion, and would have been carefully avoided. In Dublin there was no such avoidance of provocation.

Yet the avoidance of anything which might precipitate strife was indeed in these days most desirable. June 28th saw the murder of the Archduke at Sarajevo. The European sky grew rapidly overcast. Days passed, and the possibility of civil war was exchanged for the near probability of European war which might find the British Empire divided against itself.

It was necessary in the highest interests of State for the Government to make an effort to compose the cause of so much violent faction, which might at any moment

assume acute form. The Amending Bill, introduced in the House of Lords with the Government's offer embodied in it, had been altered by the Peers in a manner which Lord Morley described as tantamount to rejection. In this shape it was to come before the House of Commons on July 20th. But on that Monday, when the House reassembled after the weekly holiday, the Prime Minister rose at once and announced in tones of no ordinary solemnity that the King had thought it right to summon representatives of parties both British and Irish to a Conference next day at Buckingham Palace, over which Mr. Speaker would preside.

Redmond in two brief sentences guarded his attitude. He disclaimed all responsibility for the policy of calling the Conference and expressed no opinion as to its chances of success. The invitation had reached him and Mr. Dillon in the form of a command from the King, and as such they had accepted it.

Some may remember how radiantly fine were those far-off days in July which led us up to the brink of such undreamt-of happenings. On the Tuesday night I was sitting alone on the Terrace, when Redmond came out. For once, he was in a mood to talk. His mind was full of the strangeness and interest of that first day's Conference—a council, or parley, so momentous, so unprecedented. It touched what was very strong in him—the historic imagination. He told me how the King had received them all, stayed with them for some intercourse of welcome, and had been specially marked in his courtesy to Redmond himself, who had of course never before been presented to him. Then, he had accompanied them to the room set apart for their deliberations and had left them with their chairman, the Speaker. When I think over Redmond's description of the Sovereign's personality, it seems to me that he was describing one so paralysed, as it were, by anxiety as to have lost the power of easy, genial and natural speech. But the

dominant thought in his mind did not concern King George. One figure stood out—Sir Edward Carson. “As an Irishman,” Redmond said, “you could not help being proud to see how he towered above the others. They simply did not count. He took charge absolutely.”

As I gathered, the eight members sat four on each side of a long table, with the Speaker at the head. The Irish leaders were on his right and left, and the discussion was chiefly between them.

It turned mainly on the question of the area to be excluded. Enormous trouble had been taken, and Redmond told me later that a great map in relief had been constructed, showing the distribution of Protestant and Catholic population. This brought out with astonishing vividness the contrast: the Catholics were on the mountains and hill-tops, the Protestants down along the valley lands.

Nothing could be more cordial, Redmond said, than Sir Edward Carson's manner to him. They met as old friends, and I believe that when they parted, one asked the other that they should have “one good shake-hands for the sake of old times on the Munster circuit.” But it was clearly recognized that there was a point beyond which neither of them could take his followers, and these points could not be brought to meet. Even if adjustment had been possible on the question of time-limit, neither would give up the debatable counties, Tyrone and Fermanagh, in which the Nationalists had a clear though small majority of the population, but in which the Ulster Volunteer organization was very strong. On Friday, July 24th, Mr. Asquith announced the failure of the attempt. “The possibility of defining an area for exclusion from the operation of the Government of Ireland Bill was considered, and the Conference being unable to agree either in principle or in detail on such an area, it concluded.”

An incident which did not lack significance was that on the second day of these meetings Redmond, returning with Mr. Dillon along Birdcage Walk to the House, was



recognized by some Irish Guards in the barracks, who raised a cheer for the Nationalist leaders which ran all along the barrack square. The Army was not all disposed to take sides with Ulster and against the Nationalists.

But parts of it were. The collision between forces of the Crown and Irish Volunteers trying to land arms, which Redmond had foretold and deprecated in his letter of June 30th, was fated to occur.

On Saturday, July 25th, five thousand Ulster Volunteers, fully armed, with four machine guns—in short, an infantry brigade equipped for active service—marched through the streets of Belfast, no one interfering. On Sunday, the 26th, a private yacht sailed into Howth harbour with eleven hundred rifles on board and some boxes of ammunition. By preconcerted arrangement a body of some seven hundred Irish Volunteers had marched down to meet the yacht. These men took the rifles, and with them set out to march back in column of route to Dublin. Two thousand rounds of ammunition were with them in a truck-cart, but none was distributed.

Meanwhile the telephones had been busy. The Assistant-Commissioner of Dublin Police, Mr. Harrel, an energetic officer, was informed, and he acted instantly. The Under-Secretary, permanent official head of Dublin Castle, was at his Lodge in the Phoenix Park some two miles distant: Mr. Harrel informed him of what was happening and was ordered to meet him at the Castle. But Mr. Harrel was not content to delay. He called out what police he could muster, some hundred and eighty men, and judging that they would be insufficient, decided on his own authority to requisition the military. At the Kildare Street Club he found the Brigadier-General in command of the troops in Dublin, and this officer immediately ordered out a company of the King's Own Scottish Borderers. With this force of soldiers and police Mr. Harrel proceeded to a point on the road from Howth to Dublin and blocked the way. When the body of



Volunteers reached him, he demanded the surrender of their rifles. This was refused. He then ordered the police to disarm the men. A scuffle followed, in which nineteen rifles were seized. Some of the Volunteers without orders fired revolvers, and by this firing two soldiers were slightly wounded. One Volunteer received a slight bayonet wound.

Then there was a stop and a parley, and the Volunteer leaders threatened to distribute ammunition. While the parley lasted the Volunteers in rear of the column dispersed, carrying their rifles, leaving only a couple of ranks drawn across the road in front, who blocked the view. When Mr. Harrel perceived what was happening, he ordered the soldiers to march back to Dublin and took the police with him.

By this time wild rumours had spread through the city, and on the way back the troops were mobbed. They were pelted with every kind of missile and many were hurt, though none seriously; and it understates the truth to say that they were in no danger. They had their bayonets, and from time to time made thrusts at their assailants. At last, on the quays, at a place called Bachelor's Walk, the company was halted, and the officer in command intended, if necessary, to give an order for a few individual men to fire over the heads of the crowd. But the troops had lost their temper, and without order given a considerable number fired into the crowd. Three persons were killed and some thirty injured.

The first that I knew of these events was on the Monday, when I got the paper at a station in Gloucestershire, on my way to the House. The railway-carriage was full of casual English people, and I have never heard so much indignant comment on any piece of news. "Why should they shoot the people in Dublin when they let the Ulstermen do what they like?" That was the burden of it. It is easy to guess what was felt and thought and said in Dublin and throughout Ireland.

What Redmond said in the House of Commons is characteristic of his attitude. He demanded that full judicial and military inquiry into the action of the troops should be held, and that proper punishment should be inflicted on those found guilty.

“But,” he said, “really the responsibility rests upon those who requisitioned the troops under these circumstances. So far as the troops are concerned, I deplore more than I can say that this has occurred—this incident calculated to breed bad blood between the Irish people and the troops. I deplore that. I hope that our people will not be so unjust as to hold the troops generally responsible for what, no doubt, taking it at its worst, was the offence of a limited number of men.”

I do not think any soldier could have wished for a fairer or more friendly statement; and a chance assisted to realize his hope that the troops generally would not be held responsible. One of the killed was a woman whose son was a Dublin Fusilier. This man published a letter in the Press calling on all Dublin Fusiliers and all soldiers who sympathized with him to attend the funeral. It was well that the populace should feel on such a matter as this that all the troops were not against them; and well that they should be counselled by the leader of their nation to be reasonable in the direction of their resentment.

This whole incident should never be forgotten by those who are disposed to judge the Irish harshly for what they did, and did not do, in the succeeding years. Above all, it should be remembered that the news of it, terribly provocative in itself to any people, but tenfold provocative by reason of the contrast which it revealed as compared with the treatment of Ulster, was published to the world less than ten days before Redmond had to face the question, What should Ireland do in the war?

## CHAPTER V

### WAR IN EUROPE

#### I

THE week which began on Monday, July 27th, was feverish and excited. Formal discussion on the occurrences at Clontarf and Bachelor's Walk was confined to the Monday ; but each day had a stormy scene during question-time arising out of it. The Amending Bill from the Lords was to have been taken on Tuesday, but Mr. Asquith postponed it till Thursday, to get a calmer atmosphere. When Thursday came, it was postponed again and indefinitely. "We meet," said the Prime Minister, "under conditions of gravity which are almost unparalleled in the experience of any one of us." It was therefore necessary to "present a united front and be able to speak and act with the authority of an undivided nation." To continue the Home Rule discussion must involve the House in acute controversy in regard to "domestic differences whose importance to ourselves no one in any quarter of the House is disposed to disparage or belittle."

The Leader of the Opposition assented. Two sentences in his speech have importance. The first laid it down that this postponement should not "in any way prejudice the interests of any of the parties to the controversy." The second indicated that he spoke not only for the Unionist party but for Ulster.

It is very difficult now, after all that has crowded in upon us, jading the sensitive recipient surface of memory, to reconstitute the frame of mind in which we passed those days. One thing I clearly remember, perhaps worth

noting for its significance. In a division lobby, probably on the Wednesday night, I came in touch with a friend, then a subordinate member of the Government, who had been among the keenest advocates of our cause. I asked how he thought things were going. My question had reference to our affairs, which had been for so many months the dominant issue; but he answered with reference to the European situation, as if that alone existed. Looking back, it seems to me strange that one should have been so engrossed in any preoccupation as in reality to ignore the vast and imminent possibilities. Yet, after all, I believe my case was typical of many. For us Irish, this was the crucial point, the climax of a struggle which had been intense and continuous now for a period of four years—which in its wider sense had gone on, with ebb and flow, yet always in progress during the whole adult lifetime of our leader and his principal colleagues. For more than us, for scores of Labour men and Liberals, it had become almost a fixed belief that European war was only a nightmare of the imagination. War in the Balkans, war possibly in the East of Europe, we could think of; but war flinging the complex organization, so potent yet so delicate, of great and fully civilized States into the melting-pot—that we never really believed in. Prophets of finance, prophets of the labour world, had told us the thing was impossible. Even our most recent experience, the irruption of armed forces into the political arena, had contributed to fix in our minds the view that all armaments were merely *in terrorem*, part of a gigantic game of bluff.

In a world organized as was Europe in 1914 on the basis of universal military service, it is dangerous, not only materially but morally and intellectually, to be as the people of these islands were, segregated from all military experience. We were almost like children in a magazine of explosives: we knew, of course, that there were dangerous substances about us; but we did not

realize how suddenly and irretrievably the whole thing might go off.

I do not know how Redmond gauged the situation. But he spent the end of the week in town, and must have been less unprepared than was one like myself, who during the Saturday, Sunday and the Monday Bank Holiday was away in a most peaceful country-side, remote from news. Even on the Tuesday, the instant bearing on our own questions and our own lives of what we read in the newspapers was not clear to me. There was to be a debate, of course; but only when I saw the attendants setting chairs on the floor of the House itself—a thing which had not been done since Gladstone introduced his second Home Rule Bill—did I grasp the fact that something wholly unusual was expected.

My strong impression is that the House as a whole was in great measure unprepared for what it had to face. You could feel surprise in the air as Sir Edward Grey developed his wonderful speech. Men, shaken away from all traditional attitudes, responded from the depths of themselves to an appeal which none of us had ever heard before.

Having failed to secure my place on the Irish benches, I was sitting on one of the chairs close by the Sergeant at Arms, just inside the bar of the House, so that I saw at once both sides of the assembly: there were no parties that day. The Foreign Secretary's speech, intensely English, with all the quality that is finest in English tradition, clearly did not in its opening stages carry the House as a whole. Passages struck home, here and there, to men not to parties, kindling individual sentiments. Appeal to a common feeling for France did not elicit a general response; but here and there in every quarter there were those who leapt to their feet and cheered, waving the papers that were in their hands; and the two figures that stand out most vividly in my recollection were Willie Redmond, our leader's brother,



and Arthur Lynch. We were in a very different atmosphere already from the days of the Boer War.

It was not until the speaker reached in his statement the outrage committed on Belgian neutrality that feeling manifested itself universally. Appeal was made to the sense of honour, of fair play, of respect for pledges, by a man as well fitted to make such an appeal as ever addressed any audience ; and it was the case of Belgium that made the House of Commons unanimous.

Later in the evening speeches from the Radical group made it clear that unanimity was not yet definitive. Labour was hesitant ; Germany had still to complete Sir Edward Grey's work. With this disposition in England itself, what was likely to be the feeling in Ireland ? Nobody, I think, expected that anything would be said from our benches. There had been no consultation in our party, such as was customary and almost obligatory on important occasions. I have said before that Redmond's position was by understanding and agreement that of chairman, not of leader. Mr. Dillon, by far the most important of his colleagues, was away in Ireland. Any action that Redmond took he must take not merely in an unusual but in a new capacity, as leader, at a great moment, acting in his own right.

Neither had there been any consultation between him and the Government. He knew only what the general public knew. Parts of Sir Edward Grey's speech were to him, as to the other members of the House, a surprise at many points. At one point it certainly was. After summing up the situation, first in relation to France, then in relation to Belgium, the Foreign Secretary, speaking with the utmost gravity, foretold for Great Britain terrible suffering in this war, "whether we are in it or whether we stand aside." He made it clear that the island safety was not unchallengeable ; there could be no pledge to send an expeditionary force outside the kingdom. Then, with a sudden lift of his voice, he added : "One thing I

would say: the one bright spot in the very dreadful situation is Ireland. The position in Ireland—and this I should like to be clearly understood abroad—is not a consideration among the things we have to take into account now.”

The history of this passage is strange. All who heard assumed that the speaker relied on definite promises. Such a promise had been given, from one party. The Ulster leader had, with the sure instinct for Ulster's interest which guided him throughout, conveyed to the Government through Mr. Bonar Law an assurance that they could count on Ulster's imperial patriotism. Ulster, so far as pledges went, was the bright spot. Where Germany had counted on finding trouble for Great Britain, no trouble would be found. But Sir Edward Grey at that moment of his career was lifted perhaps beyond himself, certainly to the utmost range of his statesmanship. He was a chief member of the Ministry which had brought to the verge of complete statutory accomplishment the task which the Liberal party inherited from Gladstone. He knew—his words have been already quoted—what Ireland's gratitude to Gladstone had been even for the unfinished effort; and now, in this crucial hour, he counted upon Ireland. From Ulster, which had its bitter resentment, assurances were needed: but if Ulster were contented to fall into line, then all was well with Ireland. Speaking as one who had done his part by Ireland, with the confidence that counts upon full comradeship he assumed the generosity of Ireland's response. That did not fail him, sudden and unforeseen though the challenge came—for it was an appeal and a challenge to Ireland's generosity.

When the notable words concerning Ireland were spoken, Redmond turned to the colleague who sat next him, one of his close personal friends, and one of his wisest, most moderate and most courageous counsellors. He said: “I'm thinking of saying something. Do you

think I ought to?" Mr. Hayden answered, "That depends on what you are going to say." Redmond said: "I'm going to tell them they can take all their troops out of Ireland and we will defend the country ourselves." "In that case," said Mr. Hayden, "you should certainly speak." Redmond leant over to Mr. T. P. O'Connor, who sat immediately below him, and consulted him also. Mr. O'Connor was against it. Though the war had no more enthusiastic supporter, he thought the risk too great. It was just a week and a day since Redmond had moved an adjournment to consider the occasion when Government forces were turned out to disarm Irish Volunteers, and when troops fired without order on a Dublin crowd. Ireland was still given over to a fury of resentment, issuing not alone in speeches but in active warlike preparation. On Sunday, August 1st, memorial masses for the victims were held up and down the country. In Belfast there was a parade of four thousand Irish Volunteers; and finally, at a point on the Wicklow coast, some ten thousand rifles were landed and distributed in defiance of Government and its troops. Now, forty-eight hours after these demonstrations, would the Irish leader ask his countrymen to blot from their minds and from their hearts so recent and so terrible a wound? Would he attempt to change the whole direction of a nation's feeling? The boldest and the most generous might well have hesitated. Redmond did not.

This is not to say that he spoke without full reflection. He always thought far ahead; and in these tense days of waiting upon rumour, he must have pondered deeply upon all the possibilities—must have had intuition of what this opportunity, England's difficulty, might mean for Ireland. Other minds were on the same trail. In the Dublin papers of that morning were two letters of moment—one of them from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

"The chief point which has divided Protestant Ulster

from the rest of Ireland," he wrote, "is that Nationalists were not loyal to the Empire." Then, recalling briefly the extent to which Irish Nationalists had helped in creating that Empire, he went on: "There is no possible reason why a man should not be a loyal Irishman and a loyal Imperialist also. . . . A whole-hearted declaration of loyalty to the common ideal would at the present moment do much to allay the natural fears of Ulster and to strengthen the position of Ireland. Such a chance is unlikely to recur. I pray that the Irish leaders may understand its significance and put themselves in a position to take advantage of it."

The other letter, written from a different standpoint, was signed by Mr. M. J. Judge, a most active Irish Volunteer who had been wounded in the scuffle on the way back from Howth. "England," he said, "might inspire confidence by restoring it. She could bestow confidence by immediately arming and equipping the Irish Volunteers. The Volunteers, properly armed and equipped, could preserve Ireland from invasion, and England would be free to utilize her 'army of occupation' for the defence of her own shores."

Redmond could not have seen either of these letters, but those two trains of thought were blended in his speech—which was less a speech than a supreme action. It was the utterance of a man who has a vision and who, acting in the light of it, seeks to embody the vision in a living reality.

Mr. Bonar Law followed Sir Edward Grey with a few brief sentences of whole-hearted support. Then Redmond rose, and a hush of expectation went over the house. I can see it now, the crowded benches and the erect, solid figure with the massive hawk-visaged head thrown back, standing squarely at the top of the gangway. While he spoke, as during Sir Edward Grey's speech, the cheering broke out first intermittently and scattered over the House, then grew gradually universal. Sitting about



me were Tory members whom I did not know ; I heard their ejaculations of bewilderment, approval and delight. But in the main body of the Unionists behind the front Opposition bench papers were being waved, and when Redmond sat down many of these men stood up to cheer him. In five minutes he had changed the whole atmosphere of domestic politics in regard to the main issue of controversy.—Here is the speech :

“I hope the House will not think me impertinent to intervene in the debate, but I am moved to do so a great deal by that sentence in the speech of the Foreign Secretary in which he said that the one bright spot in the situation was the changed feeling in Ireland. Sir, in past time, when this Empire has been engaged in these terrible enterprises, it is true that it would be the utmost affectation and folly on my part to deny that the sympathies of Nationalist Ireland, for reasons deep down in the centuries of history, have been estranged from this country. But allow me to say that what has occurred in recent years has altered the situation completely. I must not touch upon any controversial topic, but this I may be allowed to say—that a wider knowledge of the real facts of Irish history has altered the view of the democracy of this country towards the Irish question, and I honestly believe that the democracy of Ireland will turn with the utmost anxiety and sympathy to this country in every trial and danger with which she is faced.

“There is a possibility of history repeating itself. The House will remember that in 1778, at the end of the disastrous American War, when it might be said that the military force of this country was almost at its lowest ebb, the shores of Ireland were threatened with invasion. Then a hundred thousand Irish Volunteers sprang into existence for the purpose of defending those shores. At first, however—and how sad is the reading of the history of those days ! no Catholic was allowed to be enrolled in that body of Volunteers ; yet from the first day the Catholics



of the South and West subscribed their money and sent it for the army of their Protestant fellow-countrymen. Ideas widened as time went on, and finally the Catholics of the South were armed and enrolled as brothers-in-arms with their fellow-countrymen. May history repeat itself ! To-day there are in Ireland two large bodies of Volunteers, one of which has sprung into existence in the North and another in the South. I say to the Government that they may to-morrow withdraw every one of their troops from Ireland. Ireland will be defended by her armed sons from invasion, and for that purpose the armed Catholics in the South will be only too glad to join arms with the armed Protestant Ulstermen. Is it too much to hope that out of this situation a result may spring which will be good, not merely for the Empire, but for the future welfare and integrity of the Irish nation ? Whilst Irishmen are in favour of peace and would desire to save the democracy of this country from all the horrors of war, whilst we will make any possible sacrifice for that purpose, still, if the necessity is forced upon this country, we offer this to the Government of the day : They may take their troops away, and if it is allowed to us, in comradeship with our brothers in the North, we will ourselves defend the shores of Ireland."

It needed no gift of prophecy to be certain that such a speech would be popular in the House of Commons, and many Unionists that day were almost aggrieved that Sir Edward Carson had not risen at once to reply to the offer in the same spirit. They did not realize the difficulty of the Ulster leader's position. To admit and welcome the unity of Ireland was to give away Ulster's case. To accept the Nationalist leader's utterance as sincere, still more to assume that Ireland as a whole would endorse it, was to weaken, if not to give away, Ulster's best argument, and from that hour to the end of the war Sir Edward Carson was most loyal to Ulster's interests.

Further, it is conceivable that by some who cheered it the speech may have been misunderstood. Yet it is not probable that many who heard Redmond believed that in order to serve England he was flinging away Ireland's national claim, to the successful furtherance of which his whole life had been devoted. The Unionist party as a whole certainly understood that to accept Redmond's offer in the spirit in which it was made meant accepting the principle of Home Rule: and on that afternoon in August they were not unready to accept it. They felt, for the speech made them feel, that a great thing had happened. Yet they might well be pardoned for some scepticism as to how the utterance might be taken in Ireland, and how it would issue in action. A famous Nationalist said some ten days later: "When I read the speech in the paper, I was filled with dismay. Now I recognize that it was a great stroke of statesmanship which I should never have had the courage to advise."

Redmond's instinct had been right. He trusted in the appeal to national pride and to the sense of national unity. Ireland was perfectly willing, and he knew it, to give loyal friendship to England on the basis of freedom. But the test of freedom had now come to be the right to bear arms, and this was a proposal that Ireland should undertake her own defence. Ireland was sick of the talk of civil war, and this was a proposal that Ulstermen and the rest should make common cause. It was an appeal addressed by an instinct, which was no less subtle than it was noble, to what was most responsive in the best qualities of Irishmen. None the less it was a statesman's utterance addressed to a people politically quick-minded; Ireland saw as well as Redmond himself that what stood in the way of Ireland's national aspiration was the opposition of one section of Irishmen. To that extent, and to that extent only, was the speech political in its purpose. Whatever made for common action made

for unity ; and whatever made for unity made for Home Rule. That is the key to Redmond's attitude throughout the war—perhaps also to Sir Edward Carson's.

## II

The response from Nationalist Ireland had not long to be waited for—although the inquest on the victims of the Bachelor's Walk tragedy was in progress on the very day when Redmond's speech appeared in the Press. Waterford Corporation instantly endorsed their member's utterance, and throughout the week similar resolutions were passed all over the country, Unionist members of these bodies joining in to second the proposals. In Cork, the City Council had before it a resolution condemning the Government for its attempt to disarm the Irish Volunteers, and calling for stringent penalties on the offenders in the Bachelor's Walk affair : the resolution was withdrawn and one of hearty support to Redmond's attitude adopted.

Yet Irish opinion did not go so far as Mr. William O'Brien, who proposed the complete dropping of the Home Rule Bill till after the war, in order to bring about a genuine national unity. The action of the Offaly corps of Volunteers, for instance, was typical. They agreed to offer their services gladly on two conditions : first, that the Home Rule Bill should go on the Statute Book ; secondly, that the Volunteers should be subsidized and equipped by Government.

But it was assumed in Ireland that no question arose about the safety of the Bill, and people gave themselves to the new emotion. Troops were cheered everywhere at stations and on the quays : National Volunteers and local bands turned out to see them off. Even the battalion of King's Own Scottish Borderers, which had been confined

to barracks since the events of July 26th, was cheered like the rest as it marched down to the transports ready for it.<sup>1</sup>

This was the attitude of the general populace. Broadly speaking, Redmond's speech pleased the people. It was welcomed by generous-minded men in another class, who responded at once in the same spirit. Lord Monteagle wrote: "Mr. Redmond has risen nobly to the occasion"; Lord Bessborough, that he trusted all the Unionists in the South would at once join the Irish Volunteers. The Marquis of Headfort, the Earls of Fingall and of Desart, Lord Powerscourt, Lord Langford, all chimed in with offers of help. Mr. George Taaffe wrote: "I thank God from the bottom of my heart that to-day we stand united Ireland." In county Wexford sixty young Protestants came in a body to join up, led by a very Tory squire.

It should be clearly noted that while Redmond's aim was to make this Ireland's war, in which Irishmen should serve together without distinction of North or South, all that he asked of the land in his speech of August 4th was that the Volunteers should undertake duties of home defence. This was precisely what Sir Edward Carson had asked of Ulster. On August 14th, in a letter to the Press, the commander of a Fermanagh battalion of Ulster Volunteers wrote: "No one will be asked to serve outside Ulster until Sir Edward Carson notifies that he is satisfied

<sup>1</sup> This fact was verified for me oddly enough. When the 16th Division went to France, it was put through the usual period of apprenticeship with trained troops, and our brigade was attached for training to the Scottish Fifteenth Division. Two companies of our battalion of the 6th Connaught Rangers were attached to the 8th and 9th K.O.S.B. I met two officers who had been in Dublin on July 26th, and it was one of these who told me of the cheering. Perhaps I may add that the relations between our Connaught Rangers and the Scots were most friendly, and that we found probably a hundred Irish Catholics in that battalion—Irishmen living in the North of England who had at once rushed to enlist in the nearest corps available.



with the attitude of the Government with regard to the Home Rule Bill and Ulster."

Redmond neither could nor did ask any man to serve outside Ireland till he was satisfied with the Government's attitude in regard to Home Rule. In the first days of the war, however, the critical question for him was to know how his offer of assistance from the Volunteers would be accepted by the Government, and at the outset all promised favourably. On August 8th a telegram was sent to the Lord-Lieutenant:

"His Majesty's Government recognize with deep gratitude the loyal help which Ireland has offered in this grave hour. They hope to announce as soon as possible arrangements by which this offer can be made use of to the fullest possible extent."

That unquestionably represented the mind of Mr. Asquith and his civilian colleagues. But a new power had transformed the Cabinet. Lord Kitchener, refusing to accept the post of Commander in Chief, had insisted on becoming Secretary of State for War.

No one is likely to underestimate Lord Kitchener's value at that hour. But probably no one now will dispute that the political control which this soldier obtained was excessive and was dangerous. Years of fierce faction had shaken the public confidence in politicians, and a soldier was traditionally above and beyond politics. But in Lord Kitchener's case the soldier was certainly remote from and below the regions of statesmanship. Narrow, domineering, and obstinate, he was a difficult colleague for anyone; and for a Prime Minister with so easy a temper as Mr. Asquith he was not a colleague but a master. He claimed to be supreme in all matters relating to the Army, and in such a war this came near to covering the whole field of government. It most certainly covered the question of dealing with the Irish Volunteers and with the Ulster Volunteers, which meant in reality the whole question of Ireland.



Immediately on Lord Kitchener's appointment Redmond had an interview with him. Redmond's report was that he had been most friendly—and most limited in his expectations. "Get me five thousand men, and I will say 'Thank you,'" he had said. "Get me ten thousand, and I will take off my hat to you." Yet the very smallness of the estimate should have been a note of warning to us; it indicated a cynical view of Ireland's response to Redmond's public declaration.

On the question of the Volunteers he made friendly promises. As the Sirdar in Egypt he had been used to giving fair words to native chiefs. There is not the least reason to suppose that Lord Kitchener would have felt bound to show Redmond his real mind.

The truth was that Lord Kitchener held in respect to Ireland the traditional opinions of the British Army. Nobody could blame the professional soldier for dislike and distrust of Irish Nationalist politicians generally; but when at such a crisis a professional soldier, by no means conspicuous for breadth of mind, came to hold such a position as Lord Kitchener seized, the result was certain to be disastrous for Irish policy unless Liberal statesmanship exercised a strong control over him. Neither Mr. Asquith nor Mr. Birrell was likely to do this.

Two views were taken of the proposal to encourage and utilize the Irish Volunteers. The first view was that Volunteers of any kind were a superfluous encumbrance at a moment when the supreme need was for men in the actual fighting-line; that encouragement of Volunteers gave an excuse for shirking war; and further, that Volunteers outside the State's control were a danger; that the danger was increased when there were two rival Volunteer forces which might fly at each other's throats; and that it was a matter for satisfaction that one of these forces should be very greatly inferior to the other in point of arms and equipment, so that considerations of prudence would lessen the chance of collision. This

satisfaction was greatly heightened by the reflection that the armed force was thoroughly loyal to the Empire and could be trusted to assist troops in the case of any attack upon the Empire begun by the other—a contingency which should always be taken into account.

This line of thought was certainly Lord Kitchener's. He had no distrust of Irish soldiers in ordinary regiments; no professional soldier ever had. But he had a deep distrust of a purely Irish military organization under Irish control. At the back of Lord Kitchener's mind was the determination "I will not arm enemies." This was the very negation and the antithesis of the second view, which was Redmond's.

Redmond's aim was to win the war, no less than Lord Kitchener's. But if Lord Kitchener realized more clearly than other men in power how far-reaching would be the need for troops, Redmond realized also far more than the men in power how vital would be the need for America. He saw from the first, knowing the English-speaking world far more widely than perhaps any member of the Government, that the Irish trouble could not limit its influence to Ireland only. Greater forces could be conciliated for war purposes by reconciliation with Ireland—by bringing Ireland heart and soul into the war—than the equivalent of many regiments. Yet even from the narrower aspect of finding men, he regarded the same policy as essential. He assumed that recruiting in Ireland must always be voluntary—at any rate a matter for Ireland's own decision: the question was how to get most troops. Knowing Ireland, he recognized how complete was the estrangement of its population from the idea of ordinary enlistment. The bulk of the population were on the land, and in Ireland, as in Great Britain, "gone for a soldier" was a word of disgrace for a farmer's son. More than that, the political organization of which he was head had inculcated an attitude of aloofness from the Army because

it was the Army which held Ireland by force. Enlistment had been discouraged, on the principle that from a military point of view Ireland was regarded as a conquered country. A test case had arisen over the Territorial Act, which was not extended to Ireland, any more than the Volunteer Acts had been. We had voted against Lord Haldane's Bill on the express ground that it put Ireland into this status of inferiority and withheld from Irishmen that right to arm and drill which was pressed upon Englishmen as a patriotic duty. We had explicitly declared then in 1907 that our influence should and must be used against enlistment.

These facts of history had not merely produced in Ireland an attitude of mind hostile to the idea, so to say, of the British Army as an institution, though the individual soldier had always been at least as popular as anyone else. They had produced a population extraordinarily unfamiliar with the idea of armament. The old Volunteers and the Territorials had at least conveyed to all ranks of society in Great Britain the possibility of joining a military organization while remaining an ordinary citizen. In the imagination of Ireland, either you were a soldier or you were not ; and if you were a soldier, you belonged to an exceptional class, remote from ordinary existence. To cross that line was a far greater step to contemplate with us than in England. Redmond reckoned, and reckoned rightly, that to bring Irishmen together in military formations, learning the art of war, was the best way to combat this disinclination to enter the Army—this feeling that enlistment meant doing something "out of the way," something contrary to usage and tradition. He reckoned that the attitude of Nationalist Ireland would alter towards a Government which put arms in their hands on their own terms ; and that with a great war on foot a temper of adventure and emulation would very soon draw young men flocking to the ranks in which they could see the reality of war. That was Redmond's policy

and it was the statesman's. Nationalist Ireland was perfectly ready to adopt the ideals which moved the British Empire at home and overseas in the war : but first the British Empire must show that it respected the ideals of Nationalist Ireland. The Empire's statesmen did so : the British democracy did so : but Lord Kitchener stood in the way.

From Ulster, it was clear that immediate cordial co-operation could not be anticipated. Yet Redmond had implicit faith in the ultimate effect of comradeship in danger, and here we know he was right. He was to pay a heavy price in blood for the seal set upon that bond ; but in the end the seal was set. For the moment, Ulster as a whole was sullen and distrustful. Feeling that to admit the good faith of Nationalists jeopardized their own political cause, they belittled what in the interests of the common weal it would have been wise even to over-value. At the outset "An Ulster Volunteer" wrote to the papers "Let us all unite as a solid nation" ; but such an utterance was exceptional. Hardly less exceptional was the line taken by "An Officer of National Volunteers" who wrote, "If the necessity arose to-morrow and the word went out from Headquarters, the National Volunteers would be prepared to fight to the very death in defending the homes and liberties of France and England." "For Ireland Only" was a motto much inculcated in those days among the Irish Volunteers. Suspicion on the one side bred estrangement on the other ; and every hour lost increased the mischief.

Moreover, in spite of the generous action taken by outstanding individuals, the general mass of Unionist opinion was grudging and uncordial. A friend who was then closely in touch with it described to me the attitude of Dublin clubs : "They were almost sorry Redmond had done the right thing." Such men were part of Ireland, and all Ireland was remote from war. For them, now as always, Home Rule was the paramount consideration,



and none could deny that the prospects for Home Rule were immensely improved by Redmond's action. In these days, when an end of the conflict was expected in three months, when every check to the Germans was magnified out of all reason, there was no sense of the relative value of issues. Everywhere in Unionist society and in the Irish Unionist Press there was ungenerous and unfriendly criticism which did much harm.

Two things could have checked these forces for evil. The first would have been an immediate decision to make Home Rule law. This would have put an end to the pestilent growth of suspicion among Nationalists, and it would have enabled Redmond to launch at once his appeal for soldiers. The other would have been a decision to make good the pledge contained in the Government's message to Lord Aberdeen and to accept in some practical way the offered service of the Volunteers.

The latter of these courses involved no controversy with Ulster, and to it Redmond first addressed himself. He made constant appeals in private to Ministers; he was angry and disappointed over the delay: and after a week he thought it necessary to raise the matter in the House. He asked the Prime Minister whether British Territorials were to be sent to Ireland to replace the troops which had been withdrawn—a step which would have been equivalent to a rejection of his offer. On this point he received satisfaction; Territorials would not be sent. He asked then if the Prime Minister could not say at once what steps would be taken to arm and equip the Volunteers. Mr. Asquith's reply emphasized the great difficulty which stood in the way. "I do not say," he added, "that it is insuperable." The first part was the voice of Lord Kitchener; the second, the voice of the Government which had sent the telegram of August 8th.

In the War Office the desire to give the National Volunteers as far as possible what they wanted did not exist, and the Government, who had that desire, had not the



determination to enforce it. Such a position can never be for long concealed. Let it be remembered, too, that all through these days there was proceeding in Dublin a public inquiry into the events of the Howth gun-running and the affray at Bachelor's Walk, and some measure of Redmond's difficulties may be obtained.

Nevertheless, his policy was winning: and when Parliament rose for an adjournment, he spent his first Sunday in Ireland motoring to Maryborough, where he inspected a great muster of Volunteers, and was able to speak to them with gladness of the response to his appeal.

"From every part of Ireland I have had assurances from the Irish Volunteers that they are ready to fulfil this duty: and from every part—perhaps better and happier still—evidences of a desire on the part of men who in the past have been divided from us to come in at this hour of danger."

He told his audience how a battalion of that famous regiment, the Inniskilling Fusiliers, had been escorted through the town of Enniskillen, in which Orange and Green have always been equally and sharply divided, by combined bodies of the Irish and Ulster Volunteer Forces. Then turning to the question of equipment, and reminding them that the proclamation against importing arms had been withdrawn, he announced that he had secured several thousand rifles to distribute.<sup>1</sup> He went on then to pledge himself—it must be said with characteristic overconfidence—as to the intentions of the Government: "The Government—which has withdrawn its troops from Ireland and which has refused to send English Territorials to take their place—is about to arm, equip and drill a large number of Irish Volunteers." Very soon, he told them, every man in the force would have a rifle—and this involved a grave responsibility, and the need for discipline in the work which was laid upon them.

<sup>1</sup> Bought in Belgium by John O'Connor M.P., and T. M. Kettle, after the Germans had entered Brussels.

"I wish them God-speed with their work. It is the holiest work that men can undertake, to maintain the freedom and the rights and to uphold the peace, the order and safety of their own nation. You ought to be proud—you, the sons and the grandsons of men who were shot down for daring to arm themselves—you ought to be proud that you have lived to see the day when with the good will of the democracy of England you are arming yourselves in the light of heaven."

The note of exultation in this passage rings again and again through his utterances. He saw, or thought he saw, the symbol of achieved liberty in the muster of young men, ready to take up the sword, and no longer branded with the name of felons for so doing. Nor was he alone in his rejoicing. The host at that meeting was a great Irish landlord, Colonel Sir Hutcheson Poe. He, upon reading Redmond's speech of August 4th had written to the Press saying that since he was too old to serve he was taking steps to arm and equip a hundred National Volunteers. Now, in Redmond's presence, addressing a body of the Volunteers, he told them what he thought of Redmond's action.

"That five minutes' speech did more to compose our differences, to unite all Irishmen in a bond of friendship and good will, than could have been accomplished by years of agitation or by a conference, however well-intentioned it might be."

That was a notable tribute from one of the eight men who formed the historic Land Conference of 1902; and Sir Hutcheson Poe was not the man to rest on complimentary expressions. He set to work at once to promote a memorial praying for joint action between Ulster and the Irish Volunteers and for settlement of the political question which alone prevented such action.

Unhappily, this was not easy of accomplishment. When the House reassembled after its adjournment of a fortnight, negotiations were resumed, with the result that on August

31st the Prime Minister asked for a fresh adjournment for ten days, at the end of which time the Government hoped to be able to produce satisfactory proposals as to the Irish and Welsh Bills. Redmond felt himself obliged to enter a protest. It had been agreed that the circumstances of the war should not be allowed to inflict political injury on any party in the House; and he would give the friendliest consideration to any proposal for giving to the Opposition what they might have gained by a discussion on the Amending Bill.

"But we must emphatically say that any proposal which would have the effect of depriving us of the enactment of the Irish measure—and I presume I may say the same with reference to the Welsh measure—an enactment to which we were entitled practically automatically when the circumstances of the war arose, would do infinite mischief, and would be warmly resented by us.

"Just let me say one word more. There has arisen in Ireland the greatest opportunity that has ever arisen in the history of the connection between the two countries for a thorough reconciliation between the people of Ireland and the people of this country. There is to-day, I venture to say, a feeling of friendliness to this country, and a desire to join hands in supporting the interests of this country such as were never to be found in the past; and I do say with all respect, that it would be not only a folly, but a crime, if that opportunity were in any degree marred or wasted by any action which this country might take. I ask this House—and I ask all sections of the House—to take such a course as will enable me to go back to Ireland to translate into vigorous action the spirit of the words I used here a few days ago."

An angry scene followed. Mr. Balfour asked whether "it was possible decently to introduce subjects of acute discussion in present circumstances"—in other words, whether all mention of Home Rule must not be postponed till after the war. This provoked hot debate, checked

only by a strong appeal from the Prime Minister. But the general effect was not reassuring to Ireland. The contrast with the Tsar's prompt grant of autonomy to Poland was sharply drawn. Nobody rated high the chances of an amicable agreement. On September 4th Sir Edward Carson outlined his views in Belfast. Home Rule "will never be law in our country." But "in the interests of the State and of the Empire we will postpone active measures." This indicated sufficiently that in his judgment the Bill might become law, and that they would not be encouraged to set up immediate resistance. The Prime Minister, as chief Minister of the nation, must be supported in the war at all costs.

Next day, renewing at Coleraine his appeal for recruits, he said :

"We are not going to abate one jot or tittle of our opposition to Home Rule, and when you come back from serving your country you will be just as determined as you will find us at home."

This was the answer to Redmond's proposal of fraternization. Clearly Sir Edward Carson had made up his mind that he could not prevent the passage of the Bill, and he decided upon the strongest course, which was to advocate unlimited support to the war. Any other course would have been ruinous to his cause, which depended always upon a profession of the extremest loyalty. Yet only a strong man, confident in his leadership, could have taken this line at a moment when Ulstermen were about to feel that all their preparations were wasted and that the game had been won against them by a paralysing chance.

Before the House reassembled there was a meeting at the Carlton Club ; a report communicated to the Press attributed these words to Sir Edward Carson—they are typical of the tone of the time :

"We asked for no terms and we got none. We did not object to go under the War Office. We did not make



speeches calculated to humbug or deceive while we meant to do nothing."

On September 15th Government announced its intentions. Both Bills were to be placed on the Statute Book, but their operation deferred till the end of twelve months, or, if the war were not then over, till the end of the war. During the suspensory period Government would introduce an Amending Bill. Mr. Asquith made a flattering reference to Sir Edward Carson's action in appealing to his organization for recruits, and admitted that "it might be said that the Ulstermen had been put at a disadvantage by the loyal and patriotic action which they had undertaken."—This meant that their preparations for resistance to Mr. Asquith's Government were disorganized.—He proceeded to promise that they should never have need of such preparations; they should get all the preparations aimed at without having to use them.

"I say, speaking again on behalf of the Government, that in our view, under the conditions which now exist—we must all recognize the atmosphere which this great patriotic spirit has created in the country—the employment of force, any kind of force, for what you call the coercion of Ulster, is an absolutely unthinkable thing. So far as I am concerned, and so far as my colleagues are concerned—I speak for them, for I know their unanimous feeling—that is a thing we would never countenance or consent to."

This utterance has dominated the situation from that day to this. Ulster had organized to rebel, sooner than come under an Irish Parliament; and had refrained from rebellion because the Great War was in progress. For this reason Ulster should never be coerced, no matter what might happen. Sir Edward Carson's line of action had secured an enormous concession: he might have gone back to his people and said, "We have won." But he was strong enough to represent it as a new outrage, which they for the sake of loyalty must in the hour of



common danger submit to endure. By this course, risky for himself, he vastly improved their position in all future negotiation.—After a violent speech from Mr. Bonar Law the Tory party walked out of the House in a body.

Redmond rose at once. He denounced the view that Ireland had gained an advantage, or desired to gain one. The Prime Minister had at every stage assured him that the Bill would be put on the Statute Book in that session, and therefore it was unjust to say that his loyalty was only conditional; he had asked for nothing that was not won in advance. Now, instead of an Act to become immediately operative, Ireland received one with at least a year's delay. Yet this moratorium did not seem to him unreasonable.

“When everybody is preoccupied by the war and when everyone is endeavouring—and the endeavour will be made as enthusiastically in Ireland as anywhere else in the United Kingdom—to bring about the creation of an Army, the idea is absurd that under these circumstances a new Government and a new Parliament could be erected in Ireland.”

Further, it gave time for healing work. The two things that he cared for most “in this world of politics” were: first, that “not a single sod of Irish soil and not a single citizen of the Irish nation” should be excluded from the operation of Irish self-government; secondly, that no coercion should be applied to any single county in Ireland to force their submission.

The latter of these ideals was cast up to him by many in Ireland, first in private grumblings, afterwards with public iteration. He saw and admitted, what these critics urged, that the one aspiration made the other impossible of fulfilment, for the moment. Would it be so, he asked, after an interval in which Ulstermen and other Irishmen, Nationalist and Unionist, would be found fighting and dying side by side on the battlefield

on the Continent, and at home, as he hoped and believed, drilling shoulder to shoulder for the defence of the shores of their own country ?

On that hint he renewed his appeal to the Ulster Volunteers for co-operation and regretted that he had got no response from them. More than that, he urged that his appeal to Government had got no response. "If they had done something to arm, equip and drill a certain number at any rate of the National Volunteers the recruiting probably would have been faster than it had been." Alluding to the taunts at Ireland's shirking which had been bandied about in interruptions during the debate, he recalled the stories which already had come back from France of Irish valour ; of the Munster Fusiliers who stood by their guns all day and in the end dragged them back to their lines themselves ; the story told by wounded French soldiers who had seen the Irish Guards charge three German regiments with the bayonet, singing a strange song that the Frenchmen had never heard before—"something about God saving Ireland."

"I saw these men," said Redmond, "marching through London on their way to the station ; they marched here past this building singing 'God save Ireland !' "

But he could not rest his claim, and had no intention of resting it, merely on the prowess of the Irish regulars already in the army.

"Speaking personally for myself, I do not think it is an exaggeration to say that on hundreds of platforms in this country during the last few years I have publicly promised, not only for myself, but in the name of my country, that when the rights of Ireland were admitted by the democracy of England, Ireland would become the strongest arm in the defence of the Empire. The test has come sooner than I, or anyone, expected. I tell the Prime Minister that this test will be honourably met. I say for myself that I would feel myself personally

dishonoured if I did not say to my fellow-countrymen as I say to them here to-day, and as I will say from the public platform when I go back to Ireland, that it is their duty, and should be their honour, to take their place in the fighting-line in this contest."

That was a clear pledge. The Home Rule Bill received the Royal Assent on September 18th. But before the seal was affixed Redmond's manifesto to the Irish people was in all the newspapers. It was his call to arms.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE RAISING OF THE IRISH BRIGADES

#### I

AT the ending of the long session of Parliament in 1914 there was a curious scene in the House Commons, where members were crowded to assist at the formal passing of the Irish and Welsh Bills. On the adjournment, Mr. Will Crooks, from his seat on the front bench below the gangway, called out, "Mr. Speaker, would it be in order to sing 'God save the King'?" and without more ado uplifted his voice and the House chimed in. There must have been strange thoughts in the minds of Redmond, of Mr. Dillon, and others of the Irish, standing in the places where they had fought so long and bitter a battle, where they had been so often the object of fierce reproaches, whence they had hurled back so many taunts, now to find themselves the centre of congratulation, and joined with English members in singing on the floor of the House that national anthem which in Ireland had been for decades a symbol of ascendancy, rigidly tabooed by every Nationalist.

When the singing ended, Mr. Crooks's genial voice rose again. "God save Ireland!" he shouted.

"And God save England too!" Redmond answered.

That exchange of words outside the period of debate is, contrary to usage but very properly, recorded in Hansard.

From this time forth Redmond was on his trial. He had given pledges; he must make good to Ireland and make good to Great Britain. For the first, since Home

Rule could not be brought into operation, he must secure recognition of the National Volunteers, must establish and regularize their status; for the second, he must obtain recruits as Ireland's contribution to the war. The two proposals were in his view—and indeed were in reality—inseparably connected. For both, in order to succeed, he needed to have the cordial support of his fellow-countrymen; for both, he needed whole-hearted co-operation from the British Government. It would be too much to say that Ireland backed him cordially; but for the limitation of Ireland's response the fault lay chiefly and primarily with the Government, which failed him completely. The War Office could not actually and directly oppose his effort to raise troops; what they could do was to hamper him by the adoption of wrong methods and the refusal of right ones. Yet in that part of his task which involved making good to England, laying England and the Empire under a debt of living gratitude, his appeal was made to Ireland, and he succeeded so far that only Ireland herself could have destroyed his work. But on the other point, which involved gaining satisfaction for Ireland, the appeal was made to Government and the refusal was complete. It was worse than absolute, for it was tainted with bad faith. Mr. Asquith as Prime Minister accepted the mutual covenant which Redmond had proposed, and allowed Lord Kitchener to disallow fulfilment of it.

Redmond's view was not limited to Ireland's interest. No man living in these islands felt more keenly for the great underlying principles at issue in the war. His mission, as he conceived it, was to lead Ireland to serve those principles. But it was futile to suppose that he could secure for England all that England expected of Ireland if he could obtain from England nothing of what Ireland asked. Redmond wanted recognition for the Volunteers chiefly as a basis upon which Ireland could feel that she was building an Irish army worthy of her



record in arms ; and this army would be no mean assistance to the nations allied against Germany's aggression. Considering all the facts which have to be set out, the true cause for wonder is not the limitation but the extent of his success.

There was neither delay nor uncertainty in his exposition of Ireland's duty. Quite literally, he seized the first chance that came to his hand. He left London on the evening when the Act was signed, motored to Holyhead, as he liked to do, in the big car which his friends had presented to him—it was the only material testimonial which he ever received—and crossed by the night boat, driving on in the morning to Aughavanagh. When he reached the Vale of Ovoca he found a muster of the East Wicklow Volunteers. These were the nearest thing to him in all the force—his own friends and neighbours from the Wicklow hills. Aughrim, his post-town at the foot of his own particular valley, had its company, commanded by a friend of his, the local schoolmaster—typical of what was best in the Volunteers, a keen Gaelic Leaguer, tireless in work for the old language and old history. This man, well on in the forties, but mountain-bred and hardy, had thrown himself into the new movement—little guessing that a few months would see him a private in the British Army, or that he would come with honour to command a company of a famous Irish regiment on the battlefields of a European war.

If it had been only for the sake of Captain MacSweeney (he was then, of course, only a captain of Volunteers), I think Redmond would have stopped. But it was a gathering of many friends, who pressed him to speak at a moment when his heart was full. Grave results followed from what he said that day ; but a week sooner or later he was bound to say these things, and the results were bound to follow. Here is the pith of his utterance :

“ I know that you will make efficient soldiers. Efficient for what ? Wicklow Volunteers, in spite of the peaceful

happiness and beauty of the scene in which we stand, remember this country at this moment is in a state of war, and the duty of the manhood of Ireland is twofold. Its duty is at all cost to defend the shores of Ireland from foreign invasion. It has a duty more than that, of taking care that Irish valour proves itself on the field of war as it has always proved itself in the past. The interests of Ireland, of the whole of Ireland, are at stake in this war. This war is undertaken in defence of the highest principles of religion and morality and right, and it would be a disgrace for ever to our country, a reproach to her manhood, and a denial of the lessons of her history, if young Ireland confined their efforts to remaining at home to defend the shores of Ireland from an unlikely invasion, or should shrink from the duty of proving on the field of battle that gallantry and courage which have distinguished their race all through all its history. I say to you, therefore, your duty is twofold. I am glad to see such magnificent material for soldiers around me, and I say to you : go on drilling and make yourselves efficient for the work, and then account for yourselves as men, not only in Ireland itself, but wherever the firing-line extends, in defence of right and freedom and religion in this war."

On the following Thursday Mr. Asquith, as Redmond had publicly urged him to do, came to Dublin and spoke at the Mansion House with the Lord Mayor in the chair. Mr. Dillon and Mr. Devlin, as well as Redmond, were on the same platform and spoke also. The papers of September 25th, which reported the speeches of this notable gathering, contained also a manifesto from twenty members of the original Committee of the Volunteers, definitely breaking with Redmond's policy and taking his speech to the Wicklow Volunteers as their cause of action. Having recited a version of the facts which led up to the inclusion of Redmond's nominees on the Committee, it continued :

"Mr. Redmond, addressing a body of Irish Volunteers on last Sunday, has now announced for the Irish Volunteers a policy and programme fundamentally at variance with

their own published and accepted aims and objects, but with which his nominees are, of course, identified. He has declared it to be the duty of the Irish Volunteers to take foreign service under a Government which is not Irish. He has made this announcement without consulting the Provisional Committee, the Volunteers themselves, or the people of Ireland, to whose service alone they are devoted."

The next paragraph announced the expulsion of Redmond's nominees and the reconstitution of the Committee as it existed before their admission. Six resolutions followed. It is noteworthy that the attitude taken up with regard to autonomy was simply "to oppose any diminution of the measure of Irish self-government which now exists as a Statute on paper," and to repudiate any "consent to the legislative dismemberment of Ireland." There was no word of an Irish Republic and no explicit claim beyond immediate operation for the Home Rule Act.

Ireland's attitude towards the war was defined by a resolution :

"To declare that Ireland cannot, with honour or safety, take part in foreign quarrels otherwise than through the free action of a National Government of her own; and to repudiate the claim of any man to offer up the blood and lives of the sons of Irishmen and Irishwomen to the service of the British Empire while no National Government which could speak and act for the people of Ireland is allowed to exist."

Mr. Asquith, when he spoke on Thursday night, must have been informed that this split was imminent, and he spoke with a view to that situation. He said :

"Speaking here in Dublin, I address myself for a moment particularly to the National Volunteers, and I am going to ask them all over Ireland—not only them, but I make the appeal to them particularly—to contribute with promptitude and enthusiasm a large and worthy contingent of recruits to the second new army of half a

million which is now growing up, as it were, out of the ground. I should like to see, and we all want to see, an Irish Brigade—or, better still, an Irish Army Corps. Don't let them be afraid that by joining the colours they will lose their identity and become absorbed in some invertebrate mass, or what is perhaps equally repugnant, be artificially redistributed into units which have no national cohesion or character.

“We shall, to the utmost limit that military expediency will allow, see that men who have been already associated in this or that district in training and in common exercises shall be kept together and continue to recognize the corporate bond which now unites them. One thing further. We are in urgent need of competent officers, and when the officers now engaged in training these men prove equal to the test, there is no fear that their services will not be gladly and gratefully retained. But, I repeat, gentlemen, the Empire needs recruits and needs them at once. They may be fully trained and equipped in time to take their part in what may prove to be the decisive field in the greatest struggle of the history of the world. That is our immediate necessity, and no Irishman in responding to it need be afraid he is jeopardizing the future of the Volunteers.

“I do not say, and I cannot say, under what precise form of organization it will be, but I trust and I believe—indeed, I am sure—that the Volunteers will become a permanent, an integral and characteristic part of the defensive forces of the Crown.

“I have only one more word to say. Though our need is great, your opportunity is also great. The call which I am making is backed by the sympathy of your fellow-Irishmen in all parts of the Empire and of the world. . . . There is no question of compulsion or bribery. What we want, what we ask, what we believe you are ready and eager to give, is the freewill offering of a free people.”

This was a double pledge as to Redmond's two objects. It promised, first, that every inducement should be given to join a corps distinctively Irish and having national cohesion and character; secondly, that the Volunteers should obtain recognition as part of the defensive forces



of the Crown. Over and above this was an assurance of enormous importance. There was to be no question of compulsion. Nothing was asked, nothing would be asked, but "the freewill offering of a free people."

Lord Meath followed, a representative figure of Unionist Ireland and a most zealous promoter of recruiting. Then Redmond spoke, and as usual dwelt on Ireland's contribution to the forces of the Regular Army so far actually engaged, which was fully adequate in numbers. "As to quality, let Sir John French answer for that, and let my friend and fellow-countryman Admiral Beatty from Wexford speak from Heligoland."—Nothing gave him more pleasure at all times than to dwell on the personal achievement of Irishmen; his voice kindled when he named such names.—He went on to give confident assurance, having in it the note of defiant answer to the revolt which had been raised:

"I tell the Prime Minister he will get here plenty of recruits and of the best material. We will maintain here in Ireland intact and inviolate our Irish National Volunteers, and in my judgment that body of Volunteers will prove to be an inexhaustible source of strength to the new army corps and the new army that is being created."

Then, with disdainful reference to the "little handful of pro-Germans" who had "raised their voices in Ireland," he declared that it would be no less absurd to consider them representative than to take General Beyers and not General Botha as expressing the sentiments of South Africa.

Yet, as we know, the danger in South Africa was serious, and South Africa possessed freedom, not the promise of freedom. General Botha had what Redmond was denied—power to act and act promptly. In Ireland the menace was far less grave at this moment, but it was destined to become overpowering because Redmond lacked the power to deal with the situation in his own way. Already much had been lost. Between the declaration of war and the passage of the Home Rule Bill more than six



weeks had been allowed to elapse in which nothing was done in response to Redmond's proposal, except the purely negative decision that Territorials should not be sent to garrison Ireland. This inevitably strengthened the hand of those who never liked the offer he had made. From the first an accent of dissent from the new policy was plainly distinguishable in what came from the Committee of the Volunteers. Mr. Bulmer Hobson says of the famous speech of August 4th:

"This statement amounted to an unconditional offer of the services of the Irish Volunteers to the English Government, and was made without any consultation with the Volunteers themselves. The first that members of the Provisional Committee heard of their being offered to the Government was when they read it in the newspapers, and Mr. Redmond's nominees on the Committee were as much surprised as the older members. At the next meeting of the Standing Committee, held a couple of days later, the nominated members strove hard to induce us to endorse Redmond's offer. The utmost they could get, however, notwithstanding their clear party majority, was a statement of 'the complete readiness of the Irish Volunteers to take joint action with the Ulster Volunteer Force for the defence of Ireland.' Further than that the older members of the Committee declined to go. This statement in reality committed, and was meant to commit, the Volunteers to nothing, though it was interpreted by the Press as a complete endorsement of Mr. Redmond's policy."

At the beginning of the war, there were two strong currents of desire in the Volunteer body and its backers. One sought that the Volunteers should retain complete freedom of action and in no way be brought under the War Office. The other craved to see them trained and armed with the least possible delay. Colonel Moore,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lieutenant-Colonel Maurice Moore, C.B., an officer who had served with distinction in South Africa, and whose father, George Henry Moore, had been a famous advocate in Parliament of Tenant Right and Repeal.

who was the chief of their military staff at this time, says Mr. Hobson, saw no way of accomplishing the latter object without the assistance of the military authorities. Other men, who had come in since Redmond's speech, impressed on the public that without legal recognition from the Crown no Volunteer could act against the Germans in case of a landing without exposing himself and others to the penalties which Germany was inflicting in Belgium wherever the civilian population fired a shot. As a result, negotiations were opened in August 1914 with the Irish Command, and Colonel Moore, in concert with General Paget's staff, drew up a scheme for training the Irish and Ulster Volunteers and for using them when trained for a short term of garrison duty in Ireland. The scheme was submitted to the Provisional Committee, who added conditions designed to lead to rejection by the War Office; and in the upshot Colonel Moore's proposals were refused by Lord Kitchener on one side and by the Standing Committee of Volunteers on the other.

Redmond was of course aware of the failure of this scheme, and took up the matter personally. He wrote to the Chief Secretary :

HOUSE OF COMMONS,  
*September 9, 1914.*

*Private.*

MY DEAR MR. BIRRELL,

I am very anxious to put shortly before you on paper my views with reference to the Volunteer question, which we discussed with the Prime Minister to-day. I take so strong a view on the subject that I think I must ask you to show him this letter and to urge upon him the importance of getting the War Office to move. I know the influences that are at work in the War Office throwing cold water on the Volunteers and causing intense dissatisfaction in Ireland by unnecessary delays.

What I suggest should be done is this :

There are two separate questions : (1) Recruits ; and (2) Volunteers for Home Defence.

The first absolutely depends upon the way in which the second is treated. If the existing Volunteer organization is ignored and sneered at and made little of, recruiting in the country will not go ahead.

On the other hand, if the Volunteers are properly treated, I believe that recruiting will go ahead.

Now, my suggestion is this: that an announcement should be made immediately that the War Office are taking steps to assist in the equipment and arming and instructing of a certain number of the Irish Volunteers for Home Defence, and that this will be done without interfering in any way with the character or organization of the existing Volunteer Force.

Carrying out this programme will really not stand in the way of the preparing of the new Army. All that is required is a few thousand rifles, and there are plenty of them in the military stores in Ireland at this moment which are not being used and will not be used, because they are too old, in the training of the recruits, but which would be quite suitable for making a beginning at any rate in the drilling of the Volunteers. It might be stated that they would be replaced by better weapons gradually, as soon as the rush was over.

A few instructors should be placed at the disposal of the Volunteers.<sup>1</sup>

If this is done, intense satisfaction will be given all through the country, and the pride and sentiment of the Volunteers will be touched, and the appeal for recruits generally through the country, and even in the ranks of the Volunteers themselves, will, I am confident, be responded to.

But, as I have said, if this course is not taken, inevitably recruiting will flag.

I would earnestly beg of you to take this matter vigorously in hand, so that some satisfactory announcement may be made before I return to Ireland next week.

Very truly yours,

RIGHT HON. A. BIRRELL, M.P.

J. E. REDMOND.

<sup>1</sup> Rifles were really not available, nor competent instructors. But the essential was recognition. A grant towards equipment should have been given, and possibly other assistance. We secured several thousand rifles in Belgium about this time. For instructors, any old crippled veterans paid by Government would have conveyed the sense of recognition.

Mr. Asquith's speech on September 24th was at least an indication that the Prime Minister desired to act in the spirit of Redmond's suggestions. The Chief Secretary was of the same disposition. But neither of them was able to control the imperious colleague who now had taken charge of the Army, and who in the most critical moment thwarted effectually the designs of Liberal statesmanship in Ireland.

After Redmond's death an "Appreciation" published in *The Times* (with the signature "A. B.,") by Mr. Birrell, contained this passage :

"He felt to the very end, bitterly and intensely, the stupidity of the War Office. Had he been allowed to deflect the routine indifference and suspicion of the War Office from its old ruts into the deep-cut channels of Irish feelings and sentiments, he might have carried his countrymen with him, but he jumped first and tried to make his bargain afterwards and failed accordingly. English people, as their wont is, gushed over him as an Irish patriot and flouted him as an Irish statesman. Had he and his brother been put in charge of the Irish Nationalist contingents, and an Ulster man, or men, been put in a corresponding position over the Irish Protestant contingents, all might have gone well. Lord Kitchener, who was under the delusion that he was an Irishman no less than Redmond, was the main, though not the only obstacle in the path of good sense and good feeling."

Yet it is, to say the least, not clear why Lord Kitchener should have been allowed to be an obstacle. Redmond was not fortunate in his allies. He had set an example of generous courage; it was not followed by British statesmen.

From the very outset of his campaign in Ireland he had two hostilities to meet. The first was that of the section which had always been opposed to him—the Unionist party. Into this block he had already driven a wedge. The *Irish Times*, its principal organ in the South and West, was now backing him heartily, and, as



has been seen, not a few leading Unionists were doing their utmost to assist. But the real opposition, that of Ulster, was in no way conciliated. On September 28th, "Covenant Day," a great meeting was held at which the Ulstermen denounced what they called the Government's treachery, and declared their implacable determination never to submit to Home Rule. Mr. Bonar Law for the British Unionists proclaimed that whereas heretofore his party were willing to be bound by the verdict of a general election, they now withdrew that condition, and without any reservation would support Ulster in whatever course it chose to adopt.

In a purely partisan sense these speeches, and this attitude, did Redmond no harm in his campaign with Nationalists. When a certain section of Home Rulers were clamouring that he had been tricked and betrayed by the Government, had given all and got nothing, it was a good rejoinder to point to the fact that in Ulster's opinion the opportunity had been used to gain an unfair victory for Home Rule. But Redmond from the outbreak of the war had no concern with party or partisan arguments. He wanted a real truce, an end of bitterness, in Ireland.

There was, moreover, a feature of the Ulster propaganda in these days which disturbed him. General Richardson, a retired Indian officer, who had chief command of the Ulster Volunteer Force, in appealing for recruits, urged the Volunteers "to recollect the events of March last and what the Navy and Army did for Ulster. They came to the help of Ulster in the day of trouble, and would come again." He added his assurance to the Volunteers that "when the war was over, and their ranks were reinforced by some 12,000 men, thoroughly well trained and with vast field experience, they would return to the attack and relegate Home Rule to the devil."

It did not assist Redmond in gaining recruits for the Army that a general officer should represent the services



as trusty and proven allies of gentlemen whose leading idea in life was to relegate Home Rule to such a destination. The average Nationalist civilian did not easily discriminate between what was said by a retired officer out of commission and what was said by officers in uniform. There was a tendency to regard General Richardson as speaking of right for the Army—for which Nationalist recruits were desired.

The Liberal Government could not help Redmond to allay Ulster or Unionist hostility. One thing they could do; they could ensure that whatever concession or privilege was extended to those who followed Sir Edward Carson should be equally accorded to those who followed Redmond. This one thing which they could have done they did not do. They allowed the War Office to increase the arrogance of the Ulstermen and to weaken Redmond's hand, by giving Ulster special privileges, which inevitably created jealousy and suspicion in Nationalist Ireland—as shall be shown in detail.

But first it is necessary to indicate the other element of hostility—far more serious than that of Ulster, because it challenged Redmond's leadership. It was that of the extremist group, which rapidly began to welcome German successes, not for any love to Germany but because it could not conceive of any hope for Ireland except in the weakening or destruction of British power. These men, as has been already seen, had acquired an influence in the Volunteer Force out of all proportion to their numbers, owing to the fact that the Irish party had stood aloof from the movement in its early stages. Professor MacNeill said later that but for the Gaelic League and the Gaelic Athletic Association there would have been no Irish Volunteers. The bulk of both these bodies was always antagonistic to the parliamentary movement. When their opposition openly declared itself, in consequence of the East Wicklow speech, Redmond was not sorry to have a clear issue raised, involving a

formal breach. In a public letter to Colonel Moore he wrote that he read "this extraordinary manifesto with feelings of great relief," because communications from all parts of the country had forced him to the conclusion that so long as the signatories to this document remained members of the governing body, "no practical work could be done to put the Volunteer organization on a real business basis."

By a real "business basis" he meant that the Volunteers should be made a defensive force to act in concert with the troops engaged in the war. That was the clear issue. You must be for the troops or against them. In these days the official attitude of those who signed the dissenting manifesto was that Ireland should be neutral. But at such a crisis, as Mr. Dillon said in a telling phrase, a man who calls himself a neutral "is either an enemy or a coward."

It became only too clear later that we had to do with a body of men who were enemies and were certainly not cowards. Their number at this moment was difficult to determine. What immediately revealed itself was that the vast majority of the Volunteers, when choice was forced on them, adhered to Redmond.

The case of my own constituency, Galway City, may be given as typical, though rather of the towns than of the country. The country-side was apathetic; the towns were both for and against Redmond's policy. In Galway, Sinn Féin had a strong hold on the college of the National University, but, on the other hand, the depot of the Connaught Rangers was just outside the city at Renmore, and that famous corps had many partisans; while in the fishing village of the Claddagh nearly every man was a naval reservist.

I came to Galway on the day the Home Rule Bill was signed and attended a couple of Volunteer drills, where I noted the activity of some young men going round with a password: "For whom will you serve?" "For

Ireland only." After the publication of the dissenting manifesto a Committee was called, and I obtained leave to be present. There was a sharp discussion, and at the finish the vote was a tie, whether to support Redmond or the dissentients. This did not at all please me or my friends, so we determined to have a big general meeting to see on which side public support really lay. Everybody was invited, and a great many people could not get into the hall; this mattered the less because the Sinn Féiners cut the electric wires leading to the building and plunged us in darkness; luckily, it was a fine night, and we took the meeting outside with great success. A couple of interruptions were drastically dealt with, and complete peace then prevailed. Two of the four county members were among the many speakers, and the last man to address the meeting was a wounded Connaught Ranger back from the line. We cheered for the Rangers, and then we cheered for the King; the local band was present, but unable, though quite willing, to assist at this point. "Isn't it a pity," the chief bandsman said to me, "there was three of us knew the tune well, but they've all gone to the front, and not a one of us ever heard it."

But as a net result the original Volunteer organization was killed. The pick of the young and keen who were with us went off to the war; the young and keen who stayed kept up an organization with very different purposes. There was plenty of material in Galway and everywhere else to build up a volunteer corps such as Redmond desired to see; but the organizing spirits were in the opposite camp, and our friends did not interest themselves in what seemed to be a kind of play-acting when such serious business was afoot in the world. Had they been set to duties of coast patrol, under officers who were available on the spot, and given clear recognition as part of the defensive forces, their body would have been alive and active; as it was, it atrophied and

grew inert. Broadly speaking, the same was true all over the country. Redmond was willing to make bricks for the War Office to build with ; they insisted that he should make them without straw.

Facts directly connected with recruiting ultimately convinced the British public that the War Office had spoilt a great opportunity in Ireland. But the fundamental blunder, the deep-seated cause which undermined the force of Redmond's appeal, was the refusal of recognition to the National Volunteers and the failure to fulfil the promise held out in Mr. Asquith's Dublin speech.

## II

The other respects in which the War Office crippled the Nationalist efforts after recruiting were matters of detail, not of principle. The first and best help which Redmond might expect would have come from his colleagues in the party ; and all the recruiting authorities in Ireland should have been directed to secure that help locally. No such step was taken. No attempt was made to enlist Nationalists of position as patrons of the recruiting campaign. In Catholic Nationalist districts it was the rule rather than the exception to select gentlemen of the Protestant Church, and of strong Unionist opinions, as recruiting officers. If Catholic Nationalists had been selected as the official agents to assist in raising the Ulster Division, there would have been an outcry, and very rightly ; it would have been contrary to common sense. But the War Office, always even obsequiously ready to consider the Ulstermen's point of view, completely lacked sympathy for that of the majority in Ireland. In some cases the choice of a man locally unpopular on public grounds afforded—to speak plainly—an excuse for those leading Nationalists who were



loath to depart from all the tradition of their lifetime. Some of Redmond's colleagues held that they had been "extreme men" all their lives, and they thought it too hard that they should be expected to ask Irishmen to join the English Army. Yet these same men would have worked enthusiastically for the Volunteers, and by sympathy for their comrades who went out could have been led into a very different attitude.

Many of them, too, felt an honourable scruple about asking others to do what they could not do themselves. As a parliamentary group we were under a singular disability. In its early days the Irish party had been, what Sinn Féin is now, a party of the young. But so strong was the tie of gratitude that service in its ranks became an inheritance, and in most cases a man once elected stayed on till he died or resigned. By 1914, of all parties in the House we had by far the largest proportion of men over military age. I question whether three out of the seventy could have passed the standard then exacted—for two or three of the younger men were medically unfit. In these circumstances the War Office would have been well advised to waive a regulation or two to facilitate matters; but the rigour of the rules was maintained. One of my colleagues, a man in the early forties, offered to join as a private; he was refused. In my own case a similar refusal was based on Lord Kitchener's personal opinion against that of the Under-Secretary for War, to whom, as a personal friend, I had written; it took nearly six months to get the decision altered; and by that time the value of example was much depreciated. The beginning was the chance to give a lead.

Far graver was the intolerable delay in forming a corps which should appeal definitely to Irish national and Nationalist sentiment. The First Army included one Irish Division—the Tenth, destined to a splendid history, under a popular commander, Sir Bryan Mahon;



but it had no specially Nationalist colour, so to say, and no connection with the Irish Volunteers. Redmond wanted the counterpart of what had been readily granted to Sir Edward Carson; and this was what Mr. Asquith had outlined in his speech at Dublin. The Sixteenth Division already existed; its commander was appointed on September 17th. But the first step to give it the desired character was not taken without long delay, and much heart-burning and confusion resulted.

Part of the confusion is attributable to the fact that Redmond, in his desire to touch the historic memories connected with the famous corps which attained its crowning glory at Fontenoy, always spoke of "a new Irish Brigade." But at the Mansion House meeting Mr. Asquith spoke of something more than a brigade—an army corps; and Redmond, following him, instantly accepted the idea. "I used the word 'brigade' in my ignorance—I meant an Irish army corps." There was always present to his mind the hope that in some larger formation the Ulster Division might find itself shoulder to shoulder with other Irish troops.

Yet intending recruits were puzzled, and Lord Meath, writing to Redmond on October 10th that he had formed a Recruiting Committee in Dublin "for the purpose of endeavouring to raise the Irish Army Corps for which you spoke," reported that men came in asking to know where was the Irish Brigade, and refused to join anything else. Lord Meath suggested that Redmond should obtain from Lord Kitchener "an official declaration sanctioning the enlistment of Irishmen in an Irish Brigade, or Irish Army Corps, consisting exclusively of Irish officers and men." He wrote again on the 14th, asking that the Prime Minister himself should be approached, and on the 17th, in reply to some communication from Redmond: "I hope you will insist on some official and unmistakable statement that your request has been granted."

The tone of these letters, coming from no fire-eating Nationalist but the staunchest of Unionist peers, is sufficient proof that Lord Kitchener's action or inaction was resented by those who knew Ireland and had the best interests of Ireland at heart. The *Irish Times* wrote in the same sense ; and on October 19th a formal attack was launched in the *Daily Chronicle*, which drew a sharp contrast with the treatment accorded to Ulster. "Up to this hour," the writer said, "the Irish Division asked for by Mr. Redmond has been refused sanction by the War Office." This was an overstatement, but it was true that up to this time such a belief naturally prevailed, because the War Office could not be induced to make the desired announcement that sanction had been given. Moreover, although the concession had been made, it was made in a very different way from that used in dealing with Sir Edward Carson. Redmond had no voice whatever in the organization. The choice of a divisional commander was of infinite importance ; and it fell upon Lieutenant-General Sir Lawrence Parsons, K.C.B., an artillery officer of great distinction, a man of wide general knowledge and culture and of strongly marked individuality. Yet his individuality did not make him easy for Redmond to work with. He was not simply a typical professional soldier of the old Army ; he was an idealist in his profession ; and part of the professional soldier's idealism is to resent and despise political considerations. He recognized that Redmond had spoken and acted with a statesman's vision ; he failed to recognize that in many matters political tactics are necessary to carry out a statesman's plan. Also, it was very difficult for him or for any other professional soldier to realize that recruiting, under such conditions as then prevailed, was a politician's task, not a soldier's, even in Great Britain ; and that this was tenfold more true of Ireland.

The point requires to be emphasized, because it applies

to a greater personage—Lord Kitchener himself. I believe that Lord Kitchener honestly desired the success of Redmond's mission. To my personal knowledge he sent for one officer long known to him and took him from a command in which he was comfortably placed and sent him, against his will, to raise one of our battalions in a difficult area. The choice was absolutely sound, and success was achieved by methods which did not always follow strictly the letter of King's Regulations. But these departures from rule were quite in accordance with the spirit of the old Army, and Lord Kitchener was ready to stand over any of them. He would do the best he could for our division on the old lines. He would, I am certain, have said that he had done the best thing possible for it in appointing to the command an Irishman who was a first-rate soldier and a first-rate man to supervise the training of troops. So far as my judgment is able to go, the credit for making the Sixteenth Division what it was when we went to France belongs chiefly to the divisional general under whom we trained.

General Parsons had the gift, which appears to be rare in soldiers, of imparting ideas not merely about discipline but about the art of war; and he had an enthusiasm which communicated itself. But these were the qualities of the soldier in his own sphere, with which Redmond had no contact. What Redmond knew was the writer of letters which now lie before me. Running through them all is the tone of a soldier in authority who accepts assistance from a friendly, influential, well-meaning but imperfectly instructed civilian. There is no recognition of the fact that Redmond was the accepted leader of a Volunteer Force numbering over a hundred thousand men; no glimpse of any perception that morally, and almost officially, Redmond was the accredited head of the nation in whose name the division was being raised—a nation to which the statutory right of self-government had just been accorded.

The whole position was extraordinary. Legally and theoretically, Redmond was a simple member of Parliament. Practically and morally, he was the head of Ireland, exactly as Botha was of South Africa ; and he was trying to do without legal powers what Botha was doing by means of them. He was far more than the Leader of the Opposition in Great Britain ; for in Ireland there really was no Government. Moral authority, which must proceed from consent of the governed, the Irish Government had not possessed for many a long day ; but its legal status had been unimpeachable. Now even that was gone ; it was merely a stop-gap contrivance, carrying on till the Act of Parliament should receive fulfilment ; and, as a bare matter of fact, it was powerless. No operative decision of any moment was taken or could be taken at this moment in Ireland. Everything was referred to the Cabinet, and that body had no power to carry out a popular policy in Ireland.

Redmond had put forward a policy which they had accepted in principle. It could only be carried out through him, and for success he must be consulted in detail. Neither Lord Kitchener nor General Parsons in fact recognized the status which this implied. They were prepared to listen to suggestions from him ; they were not prepared to accept guidance, as they must have done had he been Prime Minister of the country.

It was impossible that Redmond's attitude in dealing with General Parsons should not imply some sense of the position which he held ; equally impossible, from the temper and mentality of the man, that there should not be in General Parsons's letters an underlying assertion that in military matters the military must decide.

The correspondence between the two men opened by a letter from Sir Lawrence Parsons, who had just established his headquarters at Mallow ; and its chief purpose was to direct Redmond's attention to the fact that an Irish Division was a much finer and nobler unit than an



Irish Brigade. Two points in it, however, are of interest. "I have been appointed by Lord Kitchener," said General Parsons, "because I am an Irishman and understand my countrymen." Also, "I have had a considerable share in selecting the officers of the Division, almost all Irishmen of every political and religious creed."

What lay behind the first of these sentences was a profound conviction that the writer thoroughly understood the necessities of the situation. That was a disastrous mistake. To understand Ireland at such a moment was difficult for anyone, impossible for a man who had not been in close touch with the mental condition produced by all these extraordinary happenings. The effect of the preparations for rebellion in Ulster, of the Curragh incident, and of the collision between troops and people in Dublin—the effect of the existence of a permitted Nationalist Volunteer Force—the effect of Redmond's appeal: these were three completely novel and conflicting currents in the stream of Irish life. Nobody could hope to estimate these developments from a general view, however intelligent, of Irish history and character, nor even from the most intimate and sympathetic acquaintance with Irish troops of the old Army.

A proof of the unhappy lack of comprehension is furnished by the second sentence I have quoted. General Parsons had been most rightly allowed by the War Office to assist in selecting officers for the Division. But it had never occurred to either party to consult Redmond on this critical matter. Does anyone suppose that Sir Edward Carson had no voice in the staffing of the Ulster Division? He had at all events received from the first a clear promise that all professional soldiers who had been officers in the Ulster Volunteers would be officers in the Division, and that any who had been mobilized should be restored to their associates in the Division.

General Parsons brought to this whole matter the



fine principle that no man's religious or political beliefs should stand in his way. He omitted to consider the effect produced on the situation by the fact that the Ulster Division had been actually allowed to exclude all Catholics, as such, and to accept no officer who was not politically in sympathy with Unionist Ulster. Redmond had not the least wish to exclude either Protestants or Unionists; he wanted all Irishmen on an equality. But he was bound by common sense and by a perception of realities to desire that Protestants and Unionists should not appear to monopolize the command.

Not one of the three brigadiers appointed was generally known in Ireland, personally or by his connections. One was an Englishman. Of the officers originally appointed not one in five was a Catholic. No Catholic commanded a battalion, scarcely half a dozen were field officers. The only Catholic field officer appointed to the Division who had been prominently connected with the Volunteers was Lord Fingall, and he had severed his connection with that body.

All this was a terrible blunder. Whether it was wise or unwise to allow the formation of a division having the peculiar character of the Ulster Division may be argued—but certainly Redmond never took exception to it, and no man who ever saw these Ulstermen in the field can regret its inception. But once it was formed, its existence created a situation which had to be recognized. An equivalent ought to have been given; but no genuine attempt to do this was made.

In replying to Sir Lawrence Parsons, Redmond raised no controversy as to what had been done; he was, indeed, not cognizant of the facts. But he addressed himself from the first to making friendly suggestions.

Amongst other things he referred to an appeal which Sir Lawrence Parsons had addressed to the women of Ireland, that they should provide regimental colours for the battalions of the Division. This appeal was promptly

met, to Redmond's great delight—delight which was soon changed into vexation, for the War Office stepped in, declared the proceeding irregular, and prohibited the holding of colours by any temporary battalion. General Parsons was obliged to publish an explanation which must have been galling to himself, and which went far to confirm the impression that the War Office, with all its preoccupations, had time to keep an unfriendly eye on the Nationalist recruiting effort.

Another trivial matter led to prolonged and irritating controversy. Towards the end of October the Belfast and Dublin papers announced that the Army Council had approved of "an Ulster badge similar to that worn by Ulster Volunteers" as a cap badge for all troops in the Ulster Division. It was pointed out that this would have the effect of preserving the identity of the Ulster Division. Immediately, and not unnaturally, the demand for a similar concession was put forward on behalf of the Sixteenth Division. General Parsons was opposed, as any old soldier would be, to a variation in the distinguishing marks of old and famous regiments. He did not allow for the fact that we needed to attract new soldiers in masses—men who as yet knew nothing of regimental tradition. Still, he co-operated in forwarding Redmond's desire, which was to meet a widely spread sentimental demand. Now that the war is over, many soldiers argue that there is no reason in the nature of things why Irish regiments should not have a clearly distinguishing uniform, as the Scots or the Colonials do. In the last months, when recruiting was a matter of urgency, Colonel Lynch induced the War Office to consent to equipping an Irish Brigade with a completely distinctive dress; unhappily the pattern was (after several months) still under discussion when the war ended. I have little doubt that from the point of view of recruiting even the badge, to say nothing of a distinctive uniform, would have been an asset; I have no doubt at all that

the refusal of it was a set-back, because it was a refusal given after a discussion and correspondence which lasted from November till February. The most interesting point, however, is that Lord Kitchener found time to occupy himself repeatedly with this question in the period between the first and second battles of Ypres. If his intervention had been judicious, it would have been as impressive as the spectacle of a battery elephant stopping in action to pick up a pin with his trunk.

On one point Redmond's representations, heartily backed by General Parsons, were successful. Catholic chaplains, of whom no adequate number were at first provided for Irish troops, were secured. It is pleasant to note that Lord Roberts, who before the war had been vehement on the Ulster side, used his personal influence to support this application. A month or two later, when death came to the veteran, dramatically, among the troops in France, Redmond told the House of Commons how on that question Lord Roberts had met him in the friendliest way and endeavoured to arrange for attending the great meeting at the Dublin Mansion House.

On another matter Redmond was able to assist the equipment of the Division. He suggested, and General Parsons fully admitted the value of, regimental bands; but the War Office made no grants for them. Redmond drew upon a large sum which had been placed at his disposal by a private individual to further his campaign, and all our battalions were indebted to him for their fife and drum equipment. There was, in short, no detail in which he was not willing and anxious to assist the Division and its commander. But the friction between the two men was unmistakable.

The most serious cause of it was the line taken by General Parsons about the appointment of officers. He laid down a rule, which I think would have had excellent results if enforced throughout the whole of the new armies, that no man should be recommended for a

commission without previous military experience, and that candidates lacking that experience must put in a period of service in the ranks. He set apart a special company in one battalion, the 7th Leinsters, to which such men should be sent, so that while drilling and exercising with the rest of the battalion, and enjoying no special privilege, they ate and slept and lived together in their own barrack rooms.

Yet the obstacle thus set up deterred a good many of the less zealous, who could not understand why that should be made a condition in the Irish Division which was not so in the Ulster Division—nor, indeed, so far as I know, anywhere else at that time. Men who had been officers of Ulster Volunteers got their commissions as a matter of course; the officer of National Volunteers had to prove his competence in the cadet company. General Parsons fully admitted this difference of treatment, and justified it by saying to Redmond that in consequence of it he would be very sorry to change officers with the Ulster Division. One cannot refuse to admire such a spirit; but he ought to have asked himself whether it was fair to impose a handicap on Redmond's efforts. Everything turned on getting representative young men from the Volunteers, and from the correspondence it appears that few were coming from the South and West. From the North they poured in. In our 47th Brigade, the 6th Royal Irish Regiment was mainly composed of Derry Nationalists; the 7th Leinsters and the 6th Connaught Rangers were almost to a man followers of Mr. Devlin from Belfast.

Next after Redmond, Mr. Devlin was the man to whom our Division owed most. But the first and the main impetus came from Redmond himself. He spoke on October 4th at Wexford, the capital of his native county; on the 11th at Waterford, his own constituency; on the 18th at Kilkenny, the constituency of his close friend Pat O'Brien. A week later he was at Belfast



and in the glens of Antrim, among the Nationalists of Ulster. Then Parliament kept him for a few weeks; in December he was back, and spoke at Tuam and in Limerick. Everywhere the Volunteers turned out in great numbers to receive him; and to them his appeal was primarily addressed.

At Wexford he laid stress on Mr. Asquith's pledge that the Volunteers should remain as a recognized permanent force for the defence of the country, and this led him to raise frankly the question of control. Who should have authority over Volunteers in a State? Surely the elected and responsible government. But pending Home Rule, "the policy and control of the Volunteers must rest with the elected representatives of the country."

More generally, he reminded them that he had always spoken of the possibility of some great political convulsion that might destroy their plans. "Nothing but an earthquake can now prevent Home Rule," he had said. "The outbreak of this overwhelming war might easily have overwhelmed Home Rule. But we have survived it."

And he went on to argue that the delay might be a blessing in disguise. Civil war between Irishmen had always seemed to him an impossibility. That impossibility was now universally admitted. In a passage of unusual heat he denounced the "so-called statesmen" who came over unasked to our country to inflame feelings—as Mr. Bonar Law had done; and he appealed to all sections "to enable us to utilize the interval before a Home Rule Parliament assembles to unite all Irishmen under a Home Rule Government."

At Waterford he was largely occupied with repelling the charge that he and his colleagues had made a bargain with the Government to ship Irish Volunteers overseas to fight whether they would or no. This was the line on which opposition was developing, and it was assisted by



articles in the English Press, which laid it down that unless the Irish furnished a sufficiency of recruits, Home Rule should be repealed.

An extension of this argument, that Redmond was buying Home Rule with the blood of young Irishmen, raised the question whether Home Rule was worth the price. While the Bill was not yet law, it was a flag, a symbol. Once it became an Act, men's attitude changed ; they turned to criticizing what they had got ; and one powerful newspaper, bitterly hostile to the Parliamentary party, expended much ingenuity in exaggerating the limitations of what had been gained. While one set of critics endeavoured to show how miserable was the price obtained, another dwelt on the unrighteousness of making such a bargain without Ireland's consent. In Redmond's speech at Kilkenny there was a note of resentment. He refused at any great crisis to consider "what might please the gallery or the crowd, or might spare him the insults of a handful of cornerboys."

But the kernel of all his thought was put into one sentence by him at Belfast. "The proper place to guard Ireland is on the battlefields of France." It was from Belfast after this meeting that the first striking demonstration of response came—organized and inspired by Mr. Devlin. On November 20th nearly a full battalion of recruits, many National Volunteers, entrained for Fermoy ; a week later they were followed by another great detachment. The example spread ; and when Redmond spoke at Limerick on December 20th, the *Irish Times* in a friendly leading article admitted that "the National Volunteers were now coming forward in large numbers and the Irish Brigade was going to be a credit to the country." This was a very different note from that which had come from Unionist quarters at earlier stages.

## III

So far as recruiting went, Redmond had won. He was sure of making good to England. But in what concerned making good to Ireland, he had no progress to report. He stated that already nearly 16,500 men from the Volunteers had joined the Army, and he could not understand why Government was so chary of giving assistance to train and equip this force. There was no doubt as to the mass of men available. Figures supplied by the police to the Chief Secretary estimated that between September 24th, when the split took place, and October 31st, out of 170,000 Volunteers, only a trifle over 12,000 adhered to Professor MacNeill.

But in Dublin the opponents were nearly 2,000 out of 6,700; and two strong battalions went almost solid against Redmond. These battalions, along with the Citizens' Army, were destined to alter the course of Irish history. It was specially true of them, but true generally of all the minority who left Redmond, that they were kept together by a resolute and determined group who had a clear purpose.

The "Irish Volunteers," as the dissentients called themselves, were made to feel that they were a minority, and an unpopular minority in more than one instance. In Galway, when they turned out to parade the streets, they were driven off with casualties—retaliation for their interference with our meeting in September. In Dundalk there was a somewhat similar occurrence. But they got more than their own back one day in November by a bold *coup*—forerunner of many. Ninety rifles belonging to the National Volunteers were being moved in a cart from one place to another. Half a dozen men armed with revolvers held up the cart and its driver and carried off the rifles. At their Convention, held in the end of October, Professor MacNeill said: "They would

go on with the work of organizing, training and equipping a Volunteer force for the service of Ireland in Ireland, and such a force might yet be the means of saving Home Rule from disaster, and of compelling the Home Rule Government to keep faith with Ireland without the exaction of a price in blood."

That forecast has not as yet realized itself; and many of us think that the chief achievement of this section has been to turn to waste a heavy price that was paid in blood by other men for the sake of Ireland. But unquestionably they were, though the minority, far more of a living reality than the mass of the original force—and for a simple reason. Their purpose, whether good or bad, was within their own control. The purpose of the majority was to carry out Redmond's policy—which was to make the Volunteers part of an Irish army of which the striking force was designed to defend Ireland on the battlefields of Flanders. But to carry out that policy the National Volunteers must be accepted as a purely local Irish military organization for home defence—controlled, in the absence of a popularly elected Irish Government, by the elected Irish representatives. The War Office thwarted that policy. Lord Kitchener would not accept it. He continued to be of the opinion that by equipping Redmond's followers he would be arming enemies.

It is worth noting that one of the ablest and most detached students of Irish affairs was wholly on Redmond's side. Lord Dunraven, appealing on behalf of "the new Irish Brigade," pointed out that both sides of Redmond's policy must be accepted. "No scheme which fails to take some account of the National Volunteer Force can do justice to what Ireland can give," he wrote. But was there everywhere a desire to do justice to what Ireland could give—and was willing to give? Redmond was warned in those days by an influential correspondent in England that a deliberate policy was being pursued

by the opponents of Home Rule, who undoubtedly had strong backing in the War Office. The National Volunteers were to become the objects of derision and contempt, which would extend to himself. By keeping the Volunteers out of active participation in war service, it could be proved that Redmond did not speak for Ireland or represent Ireland; that the Irish were raising unreal objections so as to keep an excuse for avoiding danger. It was urged on him that he should press for the extension of the Territorial Act to Ireland and endeavour to bring his men in on this footing.

There were two difficulties in the way of this scheme which nevertheless attracted him strongly. The first was that enlistment in the Territorials for home service had been stopped—so that the proposal had little advantage, if any, over enlistment in the Irish brigades. The second was due to the Volunteers themselves, many of whom, though willing to serve in the war, were unwilling to take the oath of allegiance.

There were limits to the length to which Redmond felt himself able to go, and he never dealt with this objection by argument. The example which he set was plain to all. He joined in singing "God save the King," in drinking the King's health, and at Aughavanagh now he flew the Union Jack beside the Green flag. He was willing to take part in any demonstration which implied that Nationalist Ireland under its new legal status accepted its lot in the British Empire fully and without reserve. It was superfluous for him to argue that Nationalists might consistently take the oath of allegiance when Nationalists were pledging their lives in the King's service beside every other kind of citizen in the British Empire.

Over and above his own example was the example of his brother and his son. On November 23rd Willie Redmond addressed a great meeting in Cork and told them, "I won't say to you go, but come with me." He was then fifty-three—and for most men it would have



been "too late a week." But no man was ever more instinctively a soldier, and to soldiering he had gone by instinct as a boy. He was an officer in the Wexford Militia for a year or two, till politics drove him out of that service and drew him into another. Now he went to the war gravely but joyfully. I think those days did not bring into relief any more picturesque or sympathetic figure.

One thing ought to be said. Mr. Devlin wished to join also, but Redmond held that he could not be spared from Ireland, where his influence was enormous; and he was placed in a somewhat unfair position, even though everyone who knew him knew that his chief attribute was personal courage. But he was indispensable for the work which had to be done, of helping at this strange crisis to keep Ireland peaceful and united at a time when Government was at its lowest ebb of authority.

Trouble threatened. On October 11th, the anniversary of Parnell's death, three bodies of Volunteers turned out in Dublin—the National Volunteers, the Irish Volunteers, and the Citizen Army. A collision occurred which might easily have become serious. This passed off, but early in December the Government suppressed three or four of the openly anti-British papers, which were, of course, still more virulent against Redmond. They reappeared under other names. But a meeting of protest against the suppression was held outside Liberty Hall. Mr. Larkin had, by this time, gone to America. His chief colleague, Mr. James Connolly, who was the brain of the Irish Labour Movement, presided, and at the close declared that the meeting had been held under the protection of an armed company of the Citizen Army posted in the windows and on the roof of Liberty Hall. Had the police or military attempted to disperse the meeting, he said, "those rifles would not have been silent."

Ulster was not the only place where armed men thought themselves entitled to resist coercion.



Dublin was the more dangerous because the war, which created so much employment in Great Britain, brought no new trade to Ireland, outside of Belfast. Agriculture prospered, but the towns knew only a rise of prices. Redmond began with high hopes, which Mr. Lloyd George fostered, of rapidly-developing munition works, which would at the close of hostilities leave the foundation for industrial communities. Here again, however, Redmond's representations were in vain. When the heavy extra tax on beer and spirits was levied by the first supplementary Budget, he opposed it angrily :

“You are doing some shipbuilding at Belfast, you are making a few explosives at Arklow, you are buying some woollen goods from some of the smaller manufacturers, but apart from that, the bulk of the hundreds of millions of borrowed money which you are spending on the war is being spent in England and in increasing the income of your country.”

This tax on alcohol would curtail the most important urban industry of the South and West of Ireland, and he feared that it was the old story of crushing Ireland's trade under the wheel of British interests.

Here again Redmond could only plead with the Irish Government that they, in their turn, should plead with the Imperial authorities. He should have been able to act in his own right as the head of an Irish Ministry, knowing the importance of providing employment at such a time. He saw the need and how to meet it ; but he had none of the resources of power. As compared with the other men who occupied, in the public eye, a rank equivalent to his—with General Botha, for instance—he was like a commander of those Russian armies which had to take the field against Germans with sticks and pikes.

Yet power he had—power over the heart and mind of Ireland—the power which was given him by the response

to his appeal. From January onwards the Sixteenth Division grew steadily and strongly. Recruiting began to get on a better basis. The appointment of Sir Hedley Le Bas in charge of this propaganda brought about a healthy change in methods. Appeals were used devised for Ireland, and not, as heretofore, simple replicas of the English article. Heart-breaking instances of stupidity were still of daily occurrence, but imagination and insight began to have some play ; and there was no longer the complete separation which had existed between the effort of Redmond and his colleagues and the effort of men like Lord Meath. In January Willie Redmond was posted to his battalion, the 6th Royal Irish, at Fermoy, where the 47th Brigade had its headquarters. In his case, as in my own, there had been much avoidable and most undesirable delay ; but his presence with the Division was worth an immense deal. There was delay also about his younger namesake, John Redmond's son—who was for a long time refused a commission in the Division in whose formation his father had played so great a part.

Naturally, trained speakers who had joined the Division were utilized for recruiting purposes. Willie Redmond did comparatively little of this work. It is no light job to take over command of a company, if you mean really to command it ; and with him, from the moment he joined everything came second to his military duty. But private soldiers have a less exacting time, and there was scarcely one week of my three months in the 7th Leinsters in which I did not spend the Saturday and Sunday on this business—generally in company with the most brilliant speaker, taking all in all, that I have ever heard. Kettle, then a lieutenant in the battalion, was wit, essayist, poet and orator : whether he was most a wit or most an orator might be argued for a night without conclusion ; but as talker or as speaker he had few equals. He was the son of a veteran Nationalist, who had taken a lead in Parnell's day ; but the farmer's son had become the

most characteristic product of Ireland's capital, which, rich or poor, squalid or splendid, is a metropolis—a centre of many interests, a forcing-house of many ideas. Nothing in Ireland is less English than Dublin, and its tone differs from that of England in having active sympathy with the continental mind.

Kettle was always to some extent in revolt against the theories of the Gaelic League, which he thought tended to make Ireland insular morally as well as materially. He was a good European because he was a good Irishman; and because he was both, he was, though largely educated in Germany, a fierce partisan of France.

More than all this, he had seen with his own eyes the actual martyrdom of Belgium. Sent out by Redmond to purchase rifles, he was in the country when Antwerp was occupied, and he wrote with passion of what he heard, of what he saw. Louvain to him was more than a mere name. All the Catholic in him, and all the Irish Catholic, for Ireland's association with Louvain was long and intimate, rose up in fury; he went through Ireland carrying the fiery cross.

Everywhere we went we had friendly and even enthusiastic audiences; the only place where I met any suggestion of hostility was at Killarney, and there it took the form of avoiding our meeting. We were cheered and encouraged—but we did not get many recruits, so to say, on the nail. Yet they came, generally dribbling in afterwards. From one small meeting in county Waterford we came away badly disappointed, having thought an effect was made, yet we did not take a single man. I heard later that within the next fortnight thirty men from that parish had come in by ones and twos to sign on—but at a town several miles away. Local pressure, personal not political, was against us, especially that of the mothers; and there was a shyness about taking this plunge into the unknown.

One exception stands out, in my mind, unlike the

general run of these gatherings. It was the first field day of our brigade, when, dressed in the khaki that had at last been served out, we mustered on the race-course at Fermoy, five thousand strong; and I went from the review to the train for Waterford. There was no mistaking the temper of Redmond's constituency; we got men there in hundreds, including a score or so of cadets—young men of education—for our special company of the Leinsters, which was filling up fast.

At that meeting we had one force with us which was not often active on our side. The Bishop of Waterford was strong for the war; the leading parish priest of the town took the chair and spoke straight and plain, while one of the Regulars, a Carmelite friar, made a speech which was among the most eloquent that I have ever listened to.

At the beginning of April I was gazetted to a lieutenancy in the 6th Connaught Rangers, and began to know the Division from another aspect. Broadly speaking, the men with whom I had been sharing a hut were Nationalist by opinion and by tradition—though by no means all Catholics. There were Unionists, but they were few. In the society which I now joined—a joint mess of the Royal Irish and the Rangers—matters were different.

The personnel of the 6th Royal Irish was strongly characteristic of the old Army. The commanding officer, Curzon, was of Irish descent, but of little Irish association; his second in command was an Irish Protestant gentleman of a pleasant ordinary type. The senior company commander was an Englishman. As an offset, Willie Redmond had one company, and another was commanded by an ex-guardsman, who had been a chief personage in the Derry Volunteers, and brought so many of them with him that General Parsons gave him a captaincy straight off.

In my own battalion, no Catholic had then the rank of captain. The colonel and the adjutant belonged to well-



known families in the North of Ireland, deeply involved in Covenanting politics. My own company commander was a very gallant little Dublin barrister, who, before the war, had exerted on English platforms against Home Rule the gift of racy eloquence which he now devoted to recruiting. Not half a dozen of the subalterns would have described themselves as Nationalists.

It is easy to see how all this could be represented, and was represented, to the outside public of Ireland. From the inside, one thing was clear. In our battalion every man desired the success of the Division, and more particularly of the Connaught Rangers, absolutely with a whole heart. Anything said or done that could have offended the men—practically all Catholic and Nationalist—would have drawn the most condign chastisement from our commanding officer. I never heard of any man or officer in the battalion who would have desired to change its colonel; we were fortunate, and we knew it. There was very little political discussion, and what there was turned chiefly on the question how far Redmond might be held to speak for Ireland. So far as Redmond himself was concerned, I think there were few, if any, who did not count it an honour to meet him—and some who had never been won to him before were won to him for his brother's sake.

Looking back on it all, it is clear to me that a change wrought itself in that society. I do not know one survivor of those men who does not desire that accomplishment should be given to the desire of those whom they led. In not a few cases one might put the change higher; some opinions as to what was good for Ireland were profoundly affected.

Yet this also is true. The atmosphere of the mess was one in which Willie Redmond found himself shy and a stranger. He had lived all his life in an intimate circle of Nationalist belief. Knowing the other side in the House of Commons, where many of his oldest friends



and the men he liked best (Colonel Lockwood comes most readily to my mind) were political opponents, he had nevertheless always lived with people in agreement with his views; and you could not better describe the atmosphere of our mess than by saying that it was a society in which every one liked and respected Willie Redmond, but one in which he never really was himself. He was only himself with the men.

In short, so far as the officers were concerned, our Division was not a counterpart to the Ulster Division; it was not Irish in the sense that the other was Ulster. No attempt was made to make it so, and General Parsons would have quite definitely rejected any such ideal—though less fiercely than he would have repudiated the idea of handicapping a man for his opinions or his creed. Yet many persons without design, and some with a purpose, spread broadcast the belief that Catholics and Nationalists as such were relegated to a position of inferiority in the command of this Catholic and Nationalist Division.

The worst of our difficulties lay in the long inherited suspicions of the Irish mind. At a recruiting meeting one would argue in appealing to Nationalists that the Home Rule Act was a covenant on which we were in honour bound to act, and that every man who risked his life on the faith of that covenant set a seal upon it which would never be disregarded. The listeners would applaud, but after the meeting one and another would come up privately and say: "Are you sure now they aren't fooling us again?" The Sinn Féin propaganda, always shrewdly conducted, did not fail to emphasize the pronouncement of the Tory Press that there should be no Home Rule because Ireland had failed to come forward; or to point the moral of Mr. Bonar Law's excursion to Belfast, with its violent asseveration that Ulster should be backed without limit in opposition to control by an Irish Parliament. Ireland, always suspect,

has learnt to be profoundly suspicious ; and suspicion is the form of prophecy which has most tendency to fulfil itself.

In one part of the Irish race, however, this cold paralysis of distrust had no operation. The Irish in Great Britain, always outdoing all others in the keenness of their Nationalism, were nearer the main current of the war, and were more in touch with the truth about English feeling. They had a double impulse, as Redmond had ; they saw how to serve their own cause in serving Europe's freedom ; and their response was magnificent. Mr. T. P. O'Connor probably raised more recruits by his personal appeal than any other man in England.

A great part of Redmond's correspondence in these months came from Irishmen in England who were joining as Irishmen, and who had great difficulty in making their way to our Division. Many thousands had already enlisted elsewhere ; hundreds, at least, tried to join the Sixteenth Division, and failed to get there. But there was one instance to which attention should be directed. In Newcastle-on-Tyne a movement was set on foot to raise Tyneside battalions, including one of Irish. Mr. O'Connor went down, and the upshot was that four Irish battalions were raised. They were in existence by January 1, 1915, when General Parsons was already writing that unless Irishmen could be found to fill up the Division, we must submit to the disgrace of having it made up by English recruits. The obvious answer was to annex the Tyneside Irish Brigade. Redmond, moreover, held that to bring over this brigade to train in Ireland, and to incorporate it bodily in the Sixteenth Division, would please the Tyneside men—for a tremendous welcome would have greeted them in their own country—and would have an excellent effect on Irish opinion generally. But the proposal was rigorously opposed by the War Office. It was argued that these men had enlisted technically as Northumberland Fusiliers and Northumberland Fusiliers they must remain.

In reality, as far as one can judge, the War Office were penny wise and pound foolish. "We have got these men," they said, "and we have a promise from Redmond to fill a Division. Why relieve him of one-third of his task?"

Redmond knew, and we all knew, that the essential was to get our Division complete and into the field at the earliest possible moment. He had confidence that once they got to work they would make a name for themselves, which would be the best attraction for recruits. Let it be remembered that at this moment popular expectation put the end of the war about July. When I joined the Rangers in April 1915, our mess was full of young officers threatening to throw up their commissions and enlist in some battalion which would give them the chance of seeing a fight. We could not expect to move to France before August, and by that time all that we could hope would be to form part of the army of occupation. Rumour was rife, too, that the Division would be broken up and utilized for draft-finding, that it would never see France as a unit. All this talk came back to Redmond and increased his anxiety to make the work complete.

He held, and I think rightly, that the whole machinery of recruiting worked against us; that every officer had instructions to send no man to the Sixteenth Division who could be got into a draft-finding reserve battalion. Knowing what we know, I cannot blame them; but the game was not fairly played. A man would come in and say he wanted to join the Irish Brigade. "Which regiment?" Often he might not realize that a brigade was made up of regiments, but if he knew and answered, for instance, "The Dublins," he was more likely than not to be shipped off to the Curragh, where the reserve of the regular battalions was kept, instead of to Buttevant, where our Dublins were in training.

Still, with all our troubles, things were marching ahead in that April of 1915; recruits were coming in to the

tune of 1,500 a week. Then came a political crisis and the formation of a Coalition Government. Redmond was asked to take a post in it. The letter in which the invitation was conveyed made it clear that the post could not be an Irish office.

Redmond refused. He said to me afterwards that under no conditions did he think he could have accepted. But he added, "If I had been Asquith and had wished to make it as difficult as possible to refuse, I should have offered a seat in the Cabinet without portfolio and without salary."

He was well aware how many and how unscrupulous were his enemies in Ireland; he was not prepared to give them the opportunity of saying that he had got his price for the blood of young Irishmen and the betrayal of his principles. Even apart from the question of salary, the tradition against acceptance of office under Government till Ireland's claim was satisfied would have been very hard to break. Yet Redmond saw fully how disastrous would be the effect on Irish opinion if he were not in the Government and Sir Edward Carson was.

Knowing Ireland as he did, he knew that the acceptance of Sir Edward Carson as a colleague would be taken in Ireland to imply that the Government had abandoned its support of Home Rule. Ireland would assume that the Ulster leader would not come in except on his own terms. Redmond made the strongest representations that he could to the Prime Minister to exclude both Irish parties to the unresolved dispute. But Sir Edward Carson in those days was making himself very disagreeable in the House of Commons and Mr. Asquith, as usual, followed the line of least resistance.

The effect of the Coalition as formed was seen when recruiting in Ireland dropped from 6,000 in April-May to 3,000 in May-June. It stayed at the lower figure for several months, till it was raised again by efforts for which Redmond was chiefly responsible. I do not know



whether Sir Edward Carson's presence in the Attorney-General's office, or his absence from the Opposition benches in debates, was worth ten thousand men; but that is a small measure of what was lost in Ireland by his inclusion.

#### IV

The formation of the Coalition Government marks the first stage in the history of Redmond's defeat and the victory of Sir Edward Carson and Sinn Féin.

Of what he felt upon this matter, Redmond at the time said not a word in public. Six months later, on November 2, 1915, when a debate on the naval and military situation was opened, he broke silence—and his first words were an explanation of his silence. He had not intervened, he said, in any debate on the war since its inception. "We thought a loyal and as far as possible silent support to the Government of the day was the best service we could render." This silence had been maintained "even after the formation of the Coalition"—when the Irish view had been roughly set aside, and when the personal tie to the Liberal Government with which he had been so long allied had been profoundly modified. He claimed the credit of this loyalty not merely for himself but for the whole of his country. "Since the war commenced the voice of party controversy has disappeared in Ireland."

This was pushing generosity almost to a stretch of imagination, for the voice of party controversy had not been absent from the Belfast Press, nor had it spared him. But he was speaking then, and he desired that the House should feel that he spoke, as Ireland's spokesman; he claimed credit for North and South alike in the absence of all labour troubles in war supply. "The spectacle of industrial unrest in Great Britain, the



determined and unceasing attacks in certain sections of the Press upon individual members of the Government and in a special way upon the Prime Minister, have aroused the greatest concern and the deepest indignation in Ireland," he said. "Mr. Asquith stands to-day, as before the war, high in the confidence of the Irish people." The "persistent pessimism" had effected nothing except to help in some measure "that little fringe which exists in Ireland as in England, of men who would if they could interfere with the success of recruiting."

No doubt there was an element of policy, of a fencer's skill, in all this. Sir Edward Carson had not maintained silence and certainly had not spared the Prime Minister. But in essence Redmond was relying on the plain truth. He had pledged support and he gave it to the utmost of his power, even at his peril. Mr. Birrell in the posthumous "Appreciation" which has been already quoted has this passage:

"Although it was not always easy to do business with him, being very justly suspicious of English politicians, he could be trusted more implicitly than almost every other politician I have ever come in contact with. He was slow to pass his word, but when he had done so, you knew he would keep it to the very letter, and what was almost as important, his silence and discretion could be relied upon with certainty. He was constitutionally incapable of giving anybody away who had trusted him."

Nothing but considerations of loyalty had kept him publicly silent in the months of this year when so much was done, and so much left undone, against his desire and his judgment. In June, the Sixteenth Division was within 1,000 of completion. The shortage existed in one brigade—the 49th—which had been formed of battalions having their recruiting areas in Ulster—two of the Royal Irish Fusiliers, one of the Inniskillings and one of the Royal Irish Rifles. The conception had undoubtedly been to provide for the Nationalists of Ulster. But, as

it proved, these men vastly preferred to enlist in units which were not associated with the avowedly Unionist Division, all of whose battalions belonged to one or other of these three regiments; and the 49th Brigade was not nearly up to strength. The Tenth Division was now on the point of readiness for the field; but when the final weeding out of unfit or half trained men was completed its ranks were 1,200 short. The War Office decided to draw, not on both the other Irish Divisions, but on the Sixteenth only, and only upon the deficient brigade. When the offer of immediate service was made, every man in its four battalions volunteered, and the Tenth Division was completed; but the Sixteenth was thrown back, and the discouraging rumour that it was to be only used as a reserve gained a great impetus. Redmond was very angry. He wrote to Mr. Tennant demanding that at least the Division's deficiency should at once be made up, by giving to us the full product of one or two weeks' recruiting in Ireland. Nothing of the kind was done to meet his request.

It was, however, some compensation to think that at least one of our purely Irish formations was going to take the field; and we hoped that its fortunes might remedy a complaint which began to be loudly made—that credit was withheld from the achievements of Irish troops.

The main source of this grievance was the publication of Admiral de Robeck's despatch concerning the first landing at Gallipoli. In the original document, a schedule was given showing the detail of troops told off to each of the separate landings; and the narrative, in which a sailor spoke with frank enthusiasm of the desperate valour shown by soldiers, was written with constant reference to the detail given. As some evil chance willed, the narrative mentioned by name several of the regiments engaged; but when it came to describe the forlorn hope at "V" Beach, it dealt fully with the special difficulties,

and said in brief but emphatic phrase, "Here the troops wrought miracles." The War Office, in editing the despatch for publication, suppressed the schedule, as likely to give information to the enemy, so that in this case it did not appear to whom the praise applied.

Certain things are unbelievable. No officer and no man that ever lived could from a partisan feeling against Ireland have sought to rob regiments who had done and suffered such things as the Dublins and Munsters did and suffered at "V" Beach of whatever credit could be given to them. Yet in such times as we were living in, the unbelievable is readily believed, and men saw malice in the suppression of what could not long be secret: Ireland had too many dead that day. What made the suggestion more incredible only gave a poignancy to resentment, for Admiral de Robeck was an Irishman, with his home some few miles from the regimental depot of the Dublins.

Two things, however, should be said. If only in fairness to Admiral de Robeck, the explanation should instantly have been given: it was never given in full until he came before the Dardanelles Commission, many months later, and it has not been officially published to this hour. And further, whoever edited the despatch was presumably a soldier, and knew how jealous soldiers are, and how jealous their friends are for them, of every word that goes to the recognition of such service. The effect of omitting the schedule ought to have been foreseen.

Even before the middle of August, when angry letters over this despatch were appearing in the Irish Press, other news began to come to Ireland, ill calculated to help recruiting. The Tenth Division had come into action, but under the unluckiest conditions. When the great attempt was made to cut across the peninsula by a renewed push from Anzac and by a new landing at Suvla Bay, the Irish were among the reinforcements

told off for that surprise. But from lack of room on the island bases it was considered impossible to keep them together as a division, and one brigade, the 29th, lay so far off that it could not be brought into the concerted movement on Suvla. It was therefore sent separately to Anzac, and joined in with the Australians. Broken up by regiments and not operating as a unit, it furnished useful support; but no credit for what the men did could go to Ireland. The other two brigades, the 30th and 31st, were left under the command of their divisional general and were to attack on the left of the bay. But owing to some defect in exploration of the coast-line, the movement was not so carried out; six battalions out of the eight were landed on the south of the bay and were attached to the right-hand force. Thus, in the actual operations Sir Bryan Mahon had under his command only two battalions of his own men. The remaining six operated under the command of the divisional general of the Eleventh Division, who delegated the conduct of the actual attack to one of his brigadiers. It is sufficient to say that immediately after the action both these officers were relieved of their commands. The same fate befell the corps commander under whose directions this wing of the concerted movement was placed.

In face of these facts it would be absurd to deny that the troops were badly handled. They suffered terribly from thirst, and the suffering was in large measure preventible. The attack was a failure. All the success achieved was the capture of Chocolate Hill, and the Irish claim that success. It is disputed by other regiments. This much is certain: the Irish were part of the troops who carried the hill, and at nightfall, when the rest were withdrawn to the beach, the Irish were left holding it.

But they had paid dearly, and in the days which followed many more were sacrificed in the hopeless effort



to retrieve what had been lost when the surprise attack failed. The loss fell specially on a picked battalion, the 7th Dublins, which had grown up about a footballers' company, the very flower of young Irish manhood. Grief and indignation were universal when tales of what had happened began to come through.

But of all this Redmond said no word in public. He threatened disclosure in debate at one period; yet on a strong representation from Mr. Tennant—in whose friendliness, as in the Prime Minister's, he had confidence—he refrained. To this abstention he added the most practical proof of good will. Lord Wimborne, now Lord-Lieutenant, seriously concerned at the continued drop in recruiting, which had not shown any sign of recovery since the Coalition Government was formed, came to him with the proposal for a conference on the subject. In pursuance of this suggestion Redmond went to London, where an interview took place between him and Lord Kitchener, Mr. Birrell and Mr. Tennant assisting. Redmond put in a memorandum stating his complaints, and thrashed out the subject to satisfactory conclusions on all points that directly affected recruiting. The conference ultimately met at the Viceregal Lodge on October 15th. It included the Primate of All Ireland, Lord Londonderry, Lord Meath, Lord Powerscourt, Sir Nugent Everard, the O'Connor Don and Colonel Sharman Crawford, the Lord Mayors of Dublin, Belfast and Cork, and Redmond. The military were represented by Major-General Friend, commanding the troops in Ireland, with whom Redmond always had the most cordial relations.

Only those who understand something of Irish tradition will realize how great a departure from established usage it was for Parnell's lieutenant and successor to take part formally in a meeting at the Viceregal Lodge—or indeed to cross its threshold for any purpose. But Redmond always had the logic of his convictions. As part of a compact, he was helping to the best of his power the



Government which must carry on till Home Rule could come into operation ; and here as elsewhere he was ready to mark his conviction that the enactment of Home Rule had made possible a complete change in his attitude.

Among his papers is a very full note of what passed on this occasion. It is confidential, but one may note the extreme friendliness of attitude as between Redmond and the Ulster representatives, and also the fact that the operative suggestions agreed on were proposed first by Redmond himself. They were the result of his interview with Lord Kitchener. Recruiting in Ireland should no longer be left to voluntary effort, but a Department should be formed corresponding to that over which Lord Derby had been appointed to preside in Great Britain ; and the Lord-Lieutenant himself should accept the position of its official head, and should appoint or nominate some man of known business capacity to preside over the detail of organization. Redmond pressed also that the country should be told definitely what Lord Wimborne had told the conference, that the need was for a total of about 1,100 recruits per week.

He insisted also very strongly on the publication of a letter which Lord Kitchener at his instance had written to the conference. Its last paragraph read :

“ The Irish are entitled to their full share of the compliments paid to the rest of the United Kingdom for their hitherto magnificent response to the appeal for men ; but if that response is to reap its due and only reward in victory, the supply must be continued.”

Over 81,000 recruits had been raised in Ireland since the war started—a period of eighty-two weeks. Viewed in comparison with Lord Kitchener's original anticipations, the result might well be called “ magnificent.” But it was necessary to maintain the same weekly average, and for four months the figure had been much below this. The result of the new campaign was to raise nearly 7,500 men in seven weeks.

In the campaign thus launched, as Redmond so keenly desired, under the joint auspices of Ulstermen, Southern Unionists and Nationalists, one circumstance attracted attention. It was proposed to hold a great meeting at Newry, the frontier town where Ulster makes with the South—a centre in which recruiting had been singularly keen and successful. The scheme was to unite on one platform the Lord-Lieutenant, Redmond and Sir Edward Carson. Sir Edward Carson, however, “did not think the proposal would serve any useful purpose,” and the meeting was held without him, in December 1915.

By this time the Sixteenth Division was under orders for France. We had been since September in training at Blackdown, near Aldershot; and here Redmond was one of several distinguished visitors who came to see us and address the troops. He came down also unofficially more than once, for his brother had a pleasant house among the pine-trees—where he guarded, or was guarded by, the brigade’s mascot, the largest of three enormous wolfhounds which, through John Redmond, were presented to the Irish Division.

Towards the end of the year new rumours were afloat. The 49th Brigade had never been made up to strength, and there were stories that a non-Irish brigade was to be linked up with us. Letters from two commanding officers of the 49th Brigade illustrate the extent to which Redmond had come by all ranks to be regarded as our tutelary genius; to him they appealed for redress, fearing that they would be turned into a reserve brigade. The matter was settled at last to his content and theirs by a decision that the two brigades which were ready should go out in advance, to be followed by the 49th; and we entrained accordingly on December 17th.

Sir Lawrence Parsons wrote to Mr. Birrell: “As the last train-load moved out of Farnborough station the senior Railway Staff Officer came up to me and said,

'Well, General, that is the soberest, quietest, most amenable and best disciplined Division that has left Aldershot, and I have seen them all go.' " The compliment was well paid to General Parsons, and it may have been some consolation for a sore heart: that keen spirit had to be content to be left behind. Major-General W. B. Hickie, C.B., who had greatly distinguished himself in France, now took over command. It would be disingenuous to say that John Redmond was not content with this change; but his brother was deeply impressed by the hardship inflicted on a gallant soldier.

The Ulster Division had preceded us by three months. All three Irish Divisions were now in the field, and reserve brigades were established to feed them. Redmond could feel that in great measure his work was done, and that he could await the issue in confidence.

He wrote at this time, in a preface contributed to Mr. MacDonagh's book *The Irish at the Front*, a passage of unusual emotion which tells what he thought and felt upon this matter.

"It is these soldiers of ours, with their astonishing courage and their beautiful faith, with their natural military genius, carrying with them their green flags and their Irish war-pipes, advancing to the charge, their fearless officers at their head, and followed by their beloved chaplains as great-hearted as themselves—bringing with them a quality all their own to the sordid modern battlefield—it is these soldiers of ours to whose keeping the Cause of Ireland has passed. It was never in holier, worthier keeping than with these boys offering up their supreme sacrifice of life with a smile on their lips because it was given for Ireland."

He wrote this when fresh from a sight of troops in the field. This visit took place in November 1915, and he was full of the experience when he came down to say good-bye before we went out. Nothing in all his life had approached it in interest, he said to me. The diary of

his tour is prefixed to Mr. S. P. Ker's book, *What the Irish Regiments Have Done*—but it conveys little, except this dominant impression: "From the Irish Commander-in-Chief himself right down through the Army one meets Irishmen wherever one goes." On that journey he got the same welcome from Ulstermen as from his own nearest countrymen in the Royal Irish Regiment.

## V

One thing at least Redmond gained, I think, from his visit to the front—the sense that with the British Army in the field he was in a friendly country. He never had that sense with regard to the War Office. Running all through this critical year 1915 is the history of one long failure—his attempt to secure the creation of a Home Defence force in Ireland. Given that, he would be confident of possessing the foundation for the structure of an Irish Army—an army which would be regarded as Ireland's own. Without it, the whole fabric of his efforts must be insecure. He desired to build, as in England they built, upon the voluntary effort of a people in whom entire confidence was placed. In the War Office undoubtedly men's minds were set upon finding a regular supply of Irish troops by quite other methods—by the application of compulsion.

Redmond saw to the full the danger of attempting compulsion with an unwilling people; it was a peril which he sought to keep off, and while he lived did keep off, by securing a steady flow of recruits, by gaining a reasonable definition of Ireland's quota, and by exerting that personal authority which the recognition of his efforts conferred upon him. I do not think he was without hope of a moment when Ireland might come, as Great Britain had come by the end of this year, to



recognize that the voluntary system levied an unfair toll on the willing, and that the community itself should accept the general necessity of binding its own members. But before this could be even dreamed of as practicable, the whole force of Volunteers, North and South, must feel that they were trusted and recognized, a part in the general work.

The practical organization of the great body at his disposal was under discussion between him and Colonel Moore from February 1915 onwards; and the idea was mooted that by introducing the territorial system Ulster Volunteers and National Volunteers might be drawn into the same corps. This, however, was for the future; the immediate need was to extend the arming and training under their own organization. Redmond learnt at once that Lord Kitchener was against this; that he pointed to the existence of another armed force in the North of Ireland and argued that to create a second must mean civil war; that he believed revolutionary forces to exist in Ireland which Redmond could not control and perhaps did not even suspect. Those who then thought with Lord Kitchener can say now that events have justified his view. They omit to consider how far those events proceeded from Lord Kitchener's refusal to accept Redmond's judgment.

Of the danger Redmond was fully aware. "I understand your position to be," Mr. T. P. O'Connor wrote to him in January 1915, "that unless your plan as to the Irish Volunteers is adopted we are face to face with a most critical and dangerous situation in Ireland." Just as fully was he convinced of the way to meet it. In February, replying indignantly to Sir Reginald Brade, who had complained that Irish recruiting was "distinctly languid," he enumerated the points at which the War Office had failed to act on his own advice, and urged once more, in the first instance, his original policy of employing both Ulster and Nationalist Volunteers for Home Defence.



"If the two bodies of volunteers were trusted with the defence of the country under proper military drill and discipline, the result would unquestionably be that a large number of them would volunteer for the front. Recruiting can best be promoted by creating an atmosphere in which the patriotism of the younger men of the country can be evoked, and we have done a good deal already in this direction."

On April 4th a display was made of the force available. A review was held in the Phoenix Park of 25,000 men—splendid material, but half of them with neither arms nor uniform. The Unionist Press was friendly in its comments upon the statement which Redmond supplied after the parade, claiming that these men should be utilized for Home Defence. That day was Easter Sunday of 1915. No one guessed then what the next Easter was going to bring about.

On April 19th I find him writing officially to Mr. Birrell, seeking the Chief Secretary's influence with the War Office, and claiming, what was the truth, that the Irish Command shared his view. But at the moment recruiting was increasing weekly and the War Office were in no mood to make further concessions than those by which the improvement had been brought about. Then came the Coalition, and the consequent reduction of recruiting from close on 7,000 to 3,000 a month; and in July the Adjutant-General, Sir Henry Sclater, of his own motion approached Redmond. He suggested a meeting between Redmond and the War Office, with Sir Matthew Nathan and General Parsons in attendance. Redmond agreed to the proposal, but formulated his views in a lengthy memorandum. The first three points dealt with matters directly concerning the Sixteenth Division, but in the fourth, weighty emphasis was laid on the suggestion of recruiting Volunteers for Home Defence. Sir Henry Sclater's reply omitted completely all reference to this last—an omission on which Redmond

commented sharply. He elicited the official answer that by urging men to join on a special enlistment for home service the numbers who would join for general service would be reduced. This was diametrically opposite to Redmond's view, and he said so, and urged again that the Irish Command was of his opinion.

The proposed conference resolved itself—to Redmond's indignation—into a discussion of Redmond's memorandum between the Adjutant-General and Sir Lawrence Parsons. Only in September, when at Lord Wimborne's instance he interviewed Lord Kitchener, did he have the opportunity of raising the matter by direct speech. Lord Kitchener then declared himself willing to admit that on the question whether enlistment for Home Defence would promote or retard recruiting, Redmond's judgment was probably more valuable than his own, and he promised to review the question of Home Defence again in the light of it. But of this promise nothing came.

Meantime Redmond was being warned that the Volunteer organization as it stood had exhausted its usefulness; its enthusiasm was gone—a natural result of having no purpose. A new opening seemed to be created by the Bill which Lord Lincolnshire introduced to recognize a Volunteer Force in Great Britain which should perform military duties under the War Office control. Redmond hoped to see this carried with an extension of it to Ireland, and this was the practical proposal with which he concluded his speech when, on November 2nd, for the first time in that year, he raised in debate the questions to which so much of his time and thought had been given.

How was the Irish recruiting problem to be dealt with? He declared himself absolutely against compulsion, to impose which would be "a folly and a crime" unless the country was "practically unanimous in favour of it." The voluntary system had never had fair play—at all events in Ireland.

“It is a fact, which has its origin in history, and which I need not refer to more closely—it is a fact that in the past recruiting for the British Army was not popular with the mass of the Irish people. But when the war broke out, my colleagues and I, quite regardless, let me say, of the political risks which stared us in the face, instantly made an appeal to those whom we represented in Ireland, and told them that this was Ireland's war as well as England's war, that it was a just war, and that the recent attitude of Great Britain to Ireland had thrown upon us a great, grave duty of honour to the British Empire. We then went back from this country, and we went all through Ireland. I myself, within the space of about a month after that, made speeches at great public meetings in every one of the four provinces of Ireland. We set ourselves to the task of creating in Ireland—creating, mind you—an atmosphere favourable to recruiting, and of creating a sentiment in Ireland favourable to recruiting. I say most solemnly, that in that task we were absolutely entitled to the sympathy and the assistance of the Government and the War Office. I am sorry to say we got neither.”

He disclaimed all imputation upon the Prime Minister or the Under-Secretary, Mr. Tennant—exceptions which pointed the reference to Lord Kitchener.

“The fact remains that when we were faced with that difficult and formidable task, practically every suggestion that we made, based on the strength of our own knowledge of what was suitable for Ireland and the conditions there, was put upon one side. The gentlemen who were responsible for that evidently believed that they knew what was suited to the necessities of Ireland far better than we did. A score of times, at least, I put upon paper and sent to the Government and the War Office my suggestions and my remonstrances, but all in vain. Often, almost in despair, I was tempted to rise in this House and publicly tell the House of Commons the way in which we were hampered and thwarted in our work in Ireland. I refrained from doing so from fear of doing mischief and from fear of doing harm. To-day I am very glad that I so refrained, because

in spite of these discouragements, in spite of this thwarting and embarrassing, and in spite of the utterly faulty and ridiculous system of recruiting that was set on foot, we have succeeded, and have raised in Ireland a body of men whose numbers Lord Kitchener, in his letter to the Irish conference, declared were magnificent."

He quoted the Unionist *Birmingham Post* for the saying that what had happened in Ireland was "a miracle." From the National Volunteers 27,054 men had joined the colours; from the Ulster Volunteers 27,412. In both forces there must be many left who could not leave Ireland, yet might be utilized in Ireland.

"It may be remembered that the very day the war broke out I rose in my place in this House and offered the Volunteers to the Government for Home Defence. I only spoke, of course, of the National Volunteers. I was not entitled to speak for the Ulster Volunteers, but I suggested that they and we might work shoulder to shoulder. From that day to this the War Office have persistently refused to have anything to say to these Volunteers. The Prime Minister, a few days after I spoke, in answer to a question told me that the Government were considering at that moment how best to utilize these Volunteers. They have never been utilized since. A few days after I made my speech I went myself to the War Office, and as a result of my interviews there I submitted to the Government a scheme which would have provided them at once with 25,000 men. If that offer had been accepted, not 25,000, not 50,000, but 100,000 men would have been enlisted for Home Defence within the month. But no, it was obstinately refused. I hear that an hon. member below me is now apparently inclined to take the point that the War Office took. The War Office said that would interfere with recruiting in Ireland. Of course, we know Ireland better than the hon. member. We know our difficulties in Ireland. We do not believe that it would. On the contrary, we believe that it would have promoted recruiting. We believe that the enlistment of these men, their association in barracks and in camp, with the inevitable creation and fostering of a military spirit, would have led to a large



number of volunteers for foreign service. Our views counted for nought. In this instance they were not only our views. These views had the approval of the Irish Command, and from the purely military point of view the Irish Command was in favour of some such scheme as I had outlined, and the reason was plain. They have to provide, and are providing to this day, 20,000 to 25,000 men from the Regular Army for the defence of the coasts of Ireland—guarding the coast, guarding piers, railways, bridges, and so forth. If these men of ours had been taken up, within two or three months of training and in camp they would have been able to do this work, and would have done it ever since, and would thereby have released from 20,000 to 25,000 men. That is the chief reason, I fancy, why the Military Command in Ireland were in favour of this idea. But to this moment the refusal continues. I see that an unofficial Bill was introduced by the Marquess of Lincolnshire into the House of Lords doing, to a great measure, for England and Wales what we have been asking should be done for Ireland. I claim that that Bill shall be extended to Ireland."

The Volunteer Bill came to the House of Commons in a form making it applicable to Ireland. There it was opposed by Sir Edward Carson, who demanded that no man of military age should be accepted as a volunteer unless he consented to enlist for general service if called. This killed the Bill.

Sir Edward Carson was of opinion that the necessities of the case demanded universal compulsory service; and conscription was already in sight. With that prospect Redmond's anxiety became very grave.

On November 15th he wrote his mind to the Prime Minister :

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

November 15, 1915.

*Private.*

MY DEAR MR. ASQUITH,

I have been in a state of great anxiety for some time on the question of a possible Conscription Bill, and I have discussed the matter fully with Mr. Birrell, who



knows my views, and who, no doubt, has communicated them to you.

I think it well, however, to shortly put, in writing, our position.

In your Dublin speech you asked the Irish people for "a free offering from a free people," and the response has been, taking everything into account, in the words of Lord Kitchener, "magnificent."

Recruiting is now going on at a greater rate than ever in Ireland, and it would be a terrible misfortune if we were driven into a position on the question of conscription which would alienate that public opinion which we have now got upon our side in Ireland.

The position would, indeed, be a cruel one, if conscription were enacted for England, and Ireland excluded.

On the other hand, I must tell you that the enforcement of conscription in Ireland is an impossibility.

Faced with this dilemma, if a Conscription Bill be introduced, the Irish party will be forced to oppose it as vigorously as possible at every stage.

I regret having to write you in this way, but it is only right that I should be quite frank in the matter.

Very truly yours,

J. E. REDMOND.

RT. HON. H. H. ASQUITH, M.P.,

*Prime Minister.*

Assurances reached him that the first tentative Bill for compelling unmarried men to enlist would only be introduced to fulfil a pledge given by Mr. Asquith in connection with the Derby Scheme, and that as the Derby Scheme had not applied to Ireland, the pledge also had no bearing there. By December 21st the matter was raised in the House of Commons. Redmond, after the Prime Minister had spoken, defined what he was careful to call "my personal view" on the question of compulsory service.

"I am content to take the phrase used by the Prime Minister. I am prepared to say that I will stick at nothing—nothing which is necessary, nothing which is calculated to effect the purpose—in order to end this

war." He added: "That is the view, I am certain, of the people of Ireland."

The whole question was presented by him as "one of expediency and necessity, not of principle." From that standpoint he declared himself unconvinced that the adoption of compulsion in any shape was either expedient or necessary. It was inexpedient because it would "break up the unity of the country"—unnecessary because they had already many more men than they could either train or equip. In Ireland, a limited task had been defined, to keep up the necessary reserves for fifty-three battalions of infantry, and he pointed to the fact that so far the new organization of recruiting was producing the stipulated flow.

On these grounds, he said, the Irish party would oppose the measure, and on January 5th that opposition was offered, though Ireland was excluded from the Bill. But the first division showed a majority of more than ten to one for the proposal; and in face of that, when the House returned to the discussion, Redmond declared that Irish opposition must cease—especially in view of the support given by the responsible leaders of Labour. Sir Edward Carson, following, pressed him to go one step farther and accept the inclusion of Ireland in the Bill. Nothing, he said, could do so much to conciliate Ulster. This was the first time that any suggestion of this possibility had come from that quarter, and it came in backing a suggestion which Redmond could not accept. I was not present at the debate, and it is hard to judge of such matters from the printed record, but the impression on my mind is that the suggestion was made without any desire to embarrass. A few days later, in the Committee stage, an Ulster member moved an amendment which would have included Ireland. Mr. Bonar Law, speaking for the Government, advised against it—on the ground of expediency; it would not be an easy thing to put this measure into operation in Ireland.

Sir Edward Carson spoke later and counselled the dropping of the amendment. With matters in this stage Redmond spoke very fully to the House, recognizing the absence of all partisan tone in the speeches of Ulster members. He had long felt, he said, that "if conscription came, Ireland's whole attitude towards the war was likely to suffer cruel and unjust misrepresentation," because it must emphasize a difference between the two countries. Conscription in Ireland would be "impracticable, unworkable and impossible." Instead of leading to the increase in the supply of men it would have the opposite effect.

"It would most undoubtedly paralyse the efforts of myself and others who have worked unsparingly—and not unsuccessfully—since the commencement of the war, and would play right into the hands of those who are a contemptible minority among the Nationalists of Ireland, and who are trying—unsuccessfully trying—to prevent recruiting and to undermine thus the position and power of the Irish party because of the attitude we have taken up."

He complained once more of the Government's failure to utilize the Volunteers and of the damping effect which had resulted from the non-fulfilment of Mr. Asquith's words. Yet Ireland was doing all that was asked of it—maintaining the reserves of Irishmen for Irish regiments at the front.—This was true at the moment; but the Sixteenth Division had scarcely yet begun to come into the line and the Ulster Division, during its first few months, suffered slight casualties. In point of fact, however, the bare rumour of conscription had checked recruiting, and Redmond was guarded in his terms. It was, he said, "on the whole very satisfactory, and in the towns amazing"; but he admitted that the country districts had not given an adequate response.

But he made now an appeal to the House as a whole to lift the consideration of this whole matter on

to broad lines, to view it on the plane of statesmanship. If five years earlier anyone had foretold that in a great war Ireland would send 95,000 volunteer new recruits to fight by the side of England, would he not have been regarded as a lunatic? "The change in Ireland has been so rapid that men are apt to forget its history." That was a true saying; his own success had created difficulties for him. Once more he quoted the example of the other statesman in the Empire whose position had most analogy with his own. "I honestly believe," he said, "that General Botha's difficulties were small compared with those we had to confront in Ireland. . . . It is true to say at this moment that the overwhelming sentiment of the Irish people is with the Empire for the first time."

That was his claim, and in that month of January 1916 he was fully entitled to make it; and the House, I think, recognized his justification. His speech has in it the ring of confidence, of assurance that he would be taken at his word.

"Rest satisfied," he said; "do not try to drive Ireland." Wise words, and they were not unwisely listened to. There was no room for doubting this man's earnestness when he went on to tell how he himself had recently met Irish troops in the field, and had then pledged himself to them to spare no effort in raising the necessary reserves for their ranks among their own countrymen. "Trust us," he said to the House, indicating himself and his colleagues, "trust us to know, after all, the best methods. Do not carp at Irish effort, and do not belittle Irish effort." Then they might count on loyal and enduring support till the great struggle was ended.

That speech, as I read it, marks the highwater-line of Redmond's achievement. His statesmanship in the counsels of the Empire had prevailed for his own country. The Home Rule Act was on the Statute Book, and though not in legal operation it was present in all minds; and



now on a supreme issue—the blood-tax—Ireland's right to be treated as self-governing was recognized in fact. The argument which underlay implicitly Redmond's whole contention was never set out; it was contentious, politically, and he wisely avoided it. He spoke for a nation to which autonomy had been accorded by statute; he preferred men to feel for themselves rather than be asked to admit that no self-governing nation will submit voluntarily to the imposition of the blood-tax without its own most formal consent. All that he said was, in effect: You have Ireland with you for the first time, by our assistance; do not destroy our power to continue that assistance, do not alienate Ireland. In the counsels of the Empire his argument prevailed; and during the early months of 1916 the relations between Great Britain and Ireland were better and happier than at any time of which history holds record. An utterance from one Irishman, and the general response to it, showed this in extraordinary degree.

Our Division, or rather two brigades of it, had detrained in France on the 19th of December; the first impression as we shook ourselves together for the march to strange billets was the sound of guns. Scattered about in different villages lying round Béthune, our battalions passed the next two months in the usual training before we should take up our own sector of the line, and we saw little or nothing of each other. March found us engaged, though still only attached by companies to more seasoned troops, in some rough crater-fighting on the ugly mine-riddled stretch between Loos and Hulluch. It was when we were marching out from broken houses about the minehead at Annequin that we first met again our old stable companions, the Royal Irish—and that I first saw Willie Redmond in France at the head of his company.

He was on foot as always, for he never could be persuaded to ride while the men were marching, and I never saw more geniality of greeting on any countenance than



was on his when he came up with outstretched hand to where I was sitting by the roadside—for we had halted to see them go by. Here was a man utterly in his element, radiant literally in the enthusiasm of his devotion. He refused to listen to our talk of the bad time we had been through in the place where they were to succeed us (and in two winters of that war I never saw worse); all his talk was of the good time which we should have in the billets we were going to, which they had just left. Back there, in and about Allouagne, they rejoined us; and I remember dining with him in his company mess and hearing his eulogies of the splendid fellows that his company officers were. Then, about the time we moved up into trenches, our first leaves began and he got home in March. Naturally, he looked in at the House of Commons, and realized for the first time how uneasy well-informed persons in the lobbies were about the chances of the war. Everybody who ever came home from the front must have experienced the effect of that strange transition from unquestioning confidence to worried anxiety; but Willie Redmond was the only man who ever adequately gave expression to it.

It was on the eve of St. Patrick's Day, and the Army Estimates were under discussion in a very thin House—a wrangling, fault-finding debate. In the middle of it Willie Redmond got up, and said that as he was not likely to be there again, he had one or two things to say which he thought the House would be glad to know. Speaking as one of the oldest members, who had all but completed his thirty-third year in Parliament, he told them that every soul in the House should be proud of the troops—not of the Irish troops, but of the troops generally—because more than anything else of the splendid spirit in which they were going through the privations and dangers,—which he described with passion. If he were to deliver a message from the troops, he knew well what it would be :

“Send us out the reinforcements which are necessary, and which are naturally necessary. Send us out, as we admit you have been doing up to this, the necessary supplies, and when you do that, have trust in the men who are in the gap to conduct the war to the victory which everyone at the front is confident is bound to come. ‘And when victory does come,’ the message would run on, ‘you in the House of Commons, in the country, and in every newspaper in the country, can spend the rest of your lives in discussing as to whether the victory has been won on proper lines or whether it has not.’ Nothing in the world can depress the spirits of the men that I have seen at the front. I do not believe that there was ever enough Germans born into this world to depress them. If it were possible to depress them at all, it can only be done by pursuing a course of embittered controversy in this country—as to which was the right way or the wrong way of conducting affairs at the front. When a man feels that his feet are freezing, when he is standing in heavy rain for a whole night with no shelter, and when next morning he tries to cook a piece of scanty food over the scanty flame of a brazier in the mud, he perhaps sits down for a few minutes in the day’s dawn and takes up an old newspaper, and finds speeches and leading articles from time to time which tell him that apparently everything is going wrong, that the Ministers who are at the head of affairs in this country, upon whom he is depending, are not really men with their hearts in the work, but are really more or less callous and calculating mercenaries, who are not directing affairs in the best way, but are simply anxious to maintain their own salaries. I say that when speeches and articles of that kind are found in the newspapers they are calculated, if anything is or can be so calculated, to depress the men who are at the front.”

Then came a few words in praise of the Irish troops and in deprecation of the failure to recognize some of their services; a confident assurance that, “whether they are remembered or not,” the Sixteenth Division would do their duty, with an equal assurance that the Ulster men would do as well as they—and he reached to his conclusion:

"Since I went out there I found that the common salutation in all circumstances is one of cheer. If things go pretty well and the men are fairly comfortable, they say 'Cheer O!' If things go badly, and the snow falls and the rain comes through the roof of a billet in an impossible sort of cow-house, they say 'Cheer O!' still more. All we want out there is that you shall adopt the same tone and say 'Cheer O!' to us."

It is not too much to say that this speech was received with a cry of gratitude all over the country and throughout the Army. It said what badly needed to be said, and said it with a freshness and a dash that came superbly from a company commander in his fifty-fourth year. It was the best service that had yet been rendered to John Redmond's policy. Everybody quite naturally and simply accepted the Nationalist Irishman as the spokesman for all the troops who were actually in the line. Mr. Walter Long, always a generous and candid human being, was quick to give voice to this feeling:

"The honourable and gallant member for East Clare has been in conflict, not only with one particular political party, but during the greater part of his career with every party in turn, and has engaged in bitter controversy with them. Does anybody doubt the fact that when war was declared one great factor in the mind of the Emperor responsible for this war was that dissension would paralyse the hands of Great Britain? Ireland, whatever may have been our differences in the past, and whatever may be our differences in happier days again when we are at peace, everybody must feel by the action of her representatives, who have fought so bitterly in this House and in the country, has created a new claim for herself upon the affection, the gratitude, the respect of the people of the Empire by the great and proud part that she has played in this great struggle."

That was the position to which Redmond's policy, backed by the Irishmen who supported it with their lives, of whom his brother was the outstanding represen-

tative, had brought this great issue. The next thing which brought the name of Ireland prominently before the world was the story of action taken by other Irishmen, also at the risk of their lives, to reverse the strong current which was then carrying us forward with so hopeful augury.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE REBELLION AND ITS SEQUEL

#### I

THE facts of the Irish rebellion are too generally familiar to need more than the briefest restatement—and perhaps too little known for an attempt at detailed analysis. Broadly, a general parade of the Irish Volunteers all over the country was ordered for Easter Sunday. On the night before Good Friday a German ship with a cargo of rifles was off the Irish coast. This ship, the *Aud*, was a few hours later captured and taken in convoy by a British sloop, so that the arms were never landed. Emissaries from the Volunteers who had gone to Kerry by motor-car to receive and arrange for distributing the arms were killed in a motor accident while hurrying back to get in touch with their headquarters. On Saturday the general parade was cancelled by order of Professor MacNeill, chief of the Volunteer organization. On Monday, against his wish, a portion of the Volunteer force in Dublin, including the battalion specially under command of Pearse and MacDonagh, with the Citizen Army under James Connolly, paraded, scattered through the city and seized certain previously selected points, of which the most important was the Post Office. From it as headquarters they proclaimed an Irish Republic. Slight attempts at rising took place in county Wexford, where the town of Enniscorthy was seized, in county Galway, and in county Louth. At Galway, at Wexford and at Drogheda the National Volunteers turned out to assist in suppressing the rising. Except for a serious



encounter with a police force in county Dublin, the fighting was confined to the capital. It terminated by the unconditional surrender of the rebels on the Saturday. The struggle was prolonged by the total lack of artillery in the early stages. Riflemen established in houses could not be dislodged by direct assault of infantry without very heavy casualties to the attacking force.

The purpose of this book is to show Redmond's connection with this event and the succeeding developments from it. He failed to foresee the event; he failed to direct its developments into the course he desired. How far he is to be held responsible, or blameworthy, for these failures, readers may be assisted to decide.

From the beginning of 1916 onwards the Irish Government was warned of danger. One of its members—the Attorney-General, Sir James Campbell—advocated the seizure of arms from men parading with what were evidently stolen service rifles or bayonets. But the Chief Secretary refused to take any action which could be described as an attempt to suppress or disarm the Irish Volunteers until there was definite evidence of actual association with the enemy.

Proof of sympathy was not difficult to obtain, and the propaganda against recruiting had now reached the point of attempts to break up recruiting meetings. Still, Mr. Birrell was in a difficulty. He had a logical mind, and he knew what had been permitted to Ulster. The fact that the Attorney-General himself had been a main adviser of the Provisional Government did not make it easier to follow his advice to disarm men who professed disaffection to the existing authority. Mr. Birrell knew that if he took such action he could be attacked in the official Nationalist Press for having one law in Ulster and another in the South. Further, Redmond would certainly not have disavowed, and might even have endorsed, such a line of criticism. The reason was that Redmond, as he had never believed in the

reality of the Ulster danger, so now did not believe in this one.

Later, when Mr. Birrell resigned his post after the insurrection was suppressed, Redmond chivalrously took on himself a part of the responsibility. "I feel," he said, "that I have incurred some share of the blame which he has laid at his own door, because I entirely agreed with his view that the danger of an outbreak of the kind was not a real one, and in my conversations with him I have expressed that view, and for all I know that may have influenced him in his conduct and his management of Irish affairs." A later debate—on July 31st—showed that his strong personal feeling for Mr. Birrell had moved him rather to overstate than to belittle his advisory responsibility. Dublin Castle had never consulted him as to policy. Conferences had taken place with the Under-Secretary, Sir Matthew Nathan, but these were concerned with considering and framing the machinery to be created for bringing the Home Rule Act into operation, whenever the time came.

"There was no conference at all about the state of the country or about Sinn Féin. When once or twice in casual consultation the matter came up—I hope the House will listen to this—I did not hesitate to say what in my opinion ought to be done in certain cases by the Government. For example, I expressed a strong view to them as to how they should deal with seditious newspapers and with prosecutions. What I did suggest, they never did; what I said they ought not to do, they always did. And I want to say something further. They never gave me any information, bad or good, about the state of the country. From first to last I never saw one single confidential Government report from the police or from any other source. I know nothing whatever about their secret confidential information."

It is fair to add that the Under-Secretary was in communication from time to time with other members of

the party, who were of course in touch with Redmond. But the substantial accuracy of Redmond's statement is sufficiently evidenced by one fact. Everybody knew that Sir Roger Casement was in Berlin and had tried—most unsuccessfully—to recruit an Irish Brigade from among the Irish prisoners. But neither Redmond nor any Irish member knew that from April 17th Dublin Castle had warning that a ship was on its way from Germany with rifles. The Navy was on the alert, and when the *Aud* came off Fenit, in Kerry, on Good Friday morning, she was promptly challenged.<sup>1</sup> But in the dark hours of that morning she had landed Sir Roger Casement and his two confederates, one of whom was arrested with him the same day. On Saturday morning Government decided to take action against what was now clearly a rebel organization. But as the Chief Secretary and the General Commanding in Chief were both in London, and as the available force of men in Dublin was small, a postponement was decided on. No special precautions appear to have been taken against the contingency of an immediate rising. On Monday a very large proportion of the officers from the Curragh and the Dublin garrison were at the Fairyhouse races. In the Castle itself there was only the ordinary guard.

Redmond at this date was also in London. His lack of apprehension is sufficiently indicated by the fact that his son and daughter were both at the races, and drove up unknowingly to an armed barricade. Had he been in authority and known, as the Government knew on Saturday, that the Irish Volunteers expected and had arranged for the landing of a heavy cargo of arms on Good Friday, and that a general parade of their men had been ordered for Easter, I hope that he would have either had troops in the utmost readiness to move, or have put strong guards in places of importance. But

<sup>1</sup> The Admiralty do not appear to have communicated their information to Dublin Castle.

this is a futile speculation, for had he been in power the situation would never have arisen.

The decisive thing which drove most of the relatively small number among the Volunteers who broke away from Redmond into their original hostility was Government's failure to recognize them. Their force stood in their own eyes for the assertion of Ireland's nationality ; and many of those who took active part in the rebellion were at the outset fully prepared to assert that nationality in jeopardy of their lives in the Allied cause. Redmond's policy, had effect been given to it by the Government, still more had he himself been invested with the right to embody it in action, would have prevented the estrangement of all but a very few. Once the estrangement took place, however, I think that he undervalued what was opposed to him, both in respect of its power and of its quality. He lacked appreciation and respect for the idealists whose ideals were not his own. He underrated their sincerity, and the danger of their sincerity. The beauty of sacrifice in the young men who went out to the war, carrying Ireland's cause in their keeping, moved him profoundly ; and he saw the practical bearing of their acts on the great practical problem of statesmanship to which his life had been given. He did not guess at the sway which might be exercised over men's minds by an almost mystical belief which disdained to count with practicalities. Redmond for fifteen years had been the leader, and for thirty-five years had been a member, of a party which presented itself—with great justification—as the winner for Ireland of many positive material advantages on the way to an ultimate goal. Pearse, at a time when all the world was plunged in a prodigal welter of destruction, came forward, demanding from Irishmen nothing but a sacrifice—promising nothing but the chance for young men to shed their blood sacramentally in the cause of Ireland's freedom. Redmond also was calling for the extreme risk, but on a sane and sound



calculation, to ensure the full development of something already gained. Pearse preached, mystically, the efficacious power simply of blood shed in the name of Ireland. Those whom he brought with him into the pass of danger were few, but they were touched with his own spirit; and even the very recklessness of their act touched the popular imagination. Irish regiments, after all, could do only what other regiments were doing; their deeds were obscured in a chaos of war from which individual prowess could not emerge. Pearse and his associates offered to Irishmen a stage for themselves on which they could and did secure full personal recognition—the complete attention of Ireland's mind.

All this would have seemed vanity to Redmond's solid, positive intelligence—vanity in all senses of the word. It would have moved him to nothing but angry contempt—anger against the spirit which was prepared to divide Ireland's effort, contempt for the futility of the reasoning. But one aspect of the rising dominated all the others in his mind. He had neither tolerance nor pity for Roger Casement, who was in his eyes simply one who tried to seduce Irish troops by threats and bribes into treason to their salt, one who made himself among the worst instruments of Germany. At the re-assembly of Parliament on April 27th he expressed the "feeling of detestation and horror" with which he and his colleagues had regarded the events in Dublin; a feeling which he believed to be shared "by the overwhelming mass of the people of Ireland." On May 3rd, in a statement to the Press, he denounced fiercely "this wicked move" of men who "have tried to make Ireland the cat's-paw of Germany." "Germany plotted it, Germany organized it, Germany paid for it." The men who were Germany's agents "remained in the safe remoteness of American cities," while "misguided and insane young men in Ireland had risked, and some of them had lost, their lives in an insane anti-patriotic movement." It was anti-



patriotic, he urged, because Ireland held to the choice she had made, to the opinion which thousands of Irish soldiers had sealed with their blood. It was "not half so much treason to the cause of the Allies as treason to the cause of Home Rule."

On the day when that statement appeared the sequel had begun to unroll itself. In the House of Commons Mr. Asquith announced the trial, sentence and shooting of three signatories to the Republican proclamation—Pearse, Clarke and MacDonagh. With the exception of James Connolly, these were the men most directly answerable for launching an attempt which had cost five hundred lives and destroyed over two millions' worth of property. Redmond accepted their doom as just.

"This outbreak happily seems to be over. It has been dealt with with firmness, which was not only right, but it was the duty of the Government so to deal with it."

But now that example had been made, he held that other thoughts should guide those in authority.

"As the rebellion, or the outbreak, call it what you like, has been put down with firmness, I do beg the Government, and I speak from the very bottom of my heart and with all my earnestness, not to show undue hardship or severity to the great masses of those who are implicated, on whose shoulders there lies a guilt far different from that which lies upon the instigators and promoters of the outbreak. Let them, in the name of God, not add this to the wretched, miserable memories of the Irish people, to be stored up perhaps for generations, but let them deal with it in such a spirit of leniency as was recently exhibited in South Africa by General Botha, and in that way pave the way to the possibility . . . that out of the ashes of this miserable tragedy there may spring up something which will redound to the future happiness of Ireland and the future complete and absolute unity of this Empire. I beg of the Government, having put down this outbreak with firmness, to

take only such action as will leave the least rankling bitterness in the minds of the Irish people, both in Ireland and elsewhere throughout the world."

It is well to recall what he had in his mind. After the suppression of the South African rebellion in 1914, one man only was put to death—an officer who changed sides during an action. No attempt was made to try accused persons before a jury; a special tribunal of judges was set up by the South African Parliament. But their power of inflicting punishment was limited by the Parliament to a sentence of three years. General de Wet, the chief figure in the rebellion, was dismissed without punishment to his farm. That was the manner in which a strong native Government, realizing the possibilities of future trouble, dealt with an insurrection infinitely more serious in a military sense than that which broke out in Dublin. But in Ireland there was no native government; and the announcement of Mr. Birrell's resignation meant in reality that Mr. Asquith's Ministry had abdicated so far as Ireland was concerned. Quite properly, they had called in a competent soldier to deal with the military exigency. Quite shamefully, they left him in sole authority to handle what was essentially the task of statesmanship.

Everybody saw that in such a case the need was to prevent a rebellious spirit from spreading. Sir John Maxwell took the simple view that the way to secure this was by plenty of executions. Knowledge of Irish history cannot be expected in an English Minister, still less in an English soldier; but it could have taught him how often and how ineffectually that recipe had been applied. Still less could it be hoped that a soldier, in no sense bound to the study of contemporary politics, should allow for the effect of two factors which must certainly influence Irish judgment and Irish feeling. The first of these was the precedent within the Empire created by General Botha's Government. This, I think,

English opinion generally, and particularly English Imperialist opinion, wholly disregarded; but it was the point to which Redmond had instantly directed attention. For him, the idea of an Imperial Commonwealth of States was a reality, and within one Commonwealth there cannot be two standards of justice. The second factor was the licence accorded by a Liberal Government, and the sanction given by a Tory Opposition, to preparations for rebellion, and acts of rebellion, in Ulster. This was generally recognized by public opinion, though I think deliberately set aside by Sir John Maxwell—who perhaps is not to be blamed. But the Prime Minister, who had been chiefly and ultimately responsible for the decision to let Ulstermen do as they liked, was specially bound to consider and provide for the consequences of that line of policy in the past as it affected the present development. He was also, as the Minister responsible alike for carrying a Home Rule Act and for denying to it operation, specially bound in such a pass as this to be guided largely by the judgment of the man who but for that postponement would have been head of an Irish Government. But, under the various pressures of the moment, Mr. Asquith moved in a wholly different direction. Redmond's appeal and advice went totally disregarded. Yet Redmond knew Ireland as no Englishman could know it; and his hands were clean of guilt for what had happened. Mr. Asquith by his past inaction, his Tory colleagues by their action before the war, were deeply involved in responsibility. It is difficult, if not impossible, to find in Mr. Asquith's conduct any recognition of this cardinal fact. He judged rebels as if preparations for rebellion had never been palliated or approved.

All that Redmond could achieve was by incessant personal intervention to limit the list of executions, to put some stay on what he called later "the gross and panicky violence" with which measures of suppression

were conceived and carried out. He could not prevent the amazing procedure of sending flying columns throughout the country into places where there had been no hint of disturbance, and making arrests by the hundred without reason given or evidence produced. In many cases, men who had been thoroughly disgusted by the outbreak found themselves in jail; and disaffection was manufactured hourly.

On May 3rd, when Redmond made his public appeal to Mr. Asquith, it was still not too late to prevent the mischief from spreading. By general consent, Redmond was right when he said that the rising was thoroughly unpopular in Ireland, and most of all in Dublin. The troops on whom the insurgents fired were in the first instance Irish troops. Later in that year I was attached to one of these battalions (the 10th Dublins), and asked them how they did their scouting work during the conflict. "We needed no scouts," was the answer; "the old women told us everything." The first volley which met a company of this battalion killed an officer; he was so strongly Nationalist in his sympathy as to be almost a Sinn Féiner. Others had been active leaders in the Howth gun-running. It was not merely a case of Irishmen firing on their fellow-countrymen: it was one section of the original Volunteers firing on another.

Yet from the moment when English troops came on the scene, another strain of feeling began to make itself felt. A lady ordered tea to be made for one of the incoming regiments, halted outside her house on the line of march. The refreshment was long in coming, and she went down to see why. She found her cook up in arms: "Is it me boil the kettle for Englishmen coming in to shoot down Irishmen?" Yet that was still the voice of a minority. When I came home from France a few weeks later, a shrewd and prosperous Nationalist man of business said to me with fury: "The fools! It was the first rebellion that ever had the country



against it, and they turned the people round in a week."

Nothing could have prevented the halo of martyrdom from attaching itself to those who died by the law for the sake of Irish freedom: the tradition was too deeply ingrained in Ireland's history. Yet Redmond did not go beyond the measure of average Irish opinion when he accepted the first three executions as just. People at least knew who these men were, and their signatures to the proclamation of an Irish Republic proved their leadership. They were given the death of rebels in arms, to which no dishonour attaches. But a fatal mistake was made in suppressing all report of the proceedings of the court-martial on them, and this mistake was to be repeated indefinitely. Ireland was made to feel that this whole affair was taken completely out of the hands of Irishmen—that no attempt even was made to enlist Irish opinion on the side of law by a statement of the evidence on which law acted. Day by day there was a new bald announcement that such and such men had been shot; and these were men whose names Ireland at large had never heard of.

Then on top of all came the appalling admission that an officer suffering from insanity had taken out three prisoners and caused them to be shot without trial on his own responsibility, none of these men having any complicity with the rebellion. This incident would have inflamed public opinion in any community; in Ireland its effect was beyond words poisonous. It revived the atmosphere of the Bachelor's Walk incident; and there was only too much justification for holding that the military authorities were indisposed to take the proper disciplinary action. Its effect detracted from the excellent opinion which the troops generally had earned by their conduct: it instilled venom into the resentment of those few cases (and it was beyond hope that they should not occur) in which soldiers had either lost their heads



or yielded to the temptation of revenge in its ugliest shapes.

The result can be best expressed by recording the experience of one Sinn Féiner who was captured in the fighting. While the military escort was taking him through the streets to his place of confinement, a crowd gathered round and ran along, consisting of angry men and women who had seen bloodshed and known hunger during these days. They shouted to the soldiers to knock his brains out there and then. Three weeks later he was again marched through the streets on his way to an English prison, and again a crowd mustered. But this time, to his amazement, they were shouting: "God save you! God have pity on you! Keep your heart up! Ireland's not dead yet!"

These were the effects produced in Ireland on the mind of common people by the action of Government in enforcing the ultimate sanction of law which the members of that same Government by their action and by their inaction had brought into contempt. In England, in the meanwhile, a new Military Service Bill was going through the House, and naturally attempts to include Ireland in its operation were renewed. Sir Edward Carson, criticizing the Government of Ireland, said that (as Redmond put it in replying) Nationalists had held the power but not the responsibility. There was a note of angry protest in the Irish Leader's rejoinder. "I wish to say for myself that certainly since the Coalition Government came into operation, and before it, but certainly since then, I have had no power in the Government of Ireland. All my opinions have been overborne. My suggestions have been rejected, and my profound conviction is that if we had had the power and the responsibility for the Government of our country during the past two years, recent occurrences in Ireland would never have taken place."

I think that view was at that moment very generally

shared in England. The British Press had shown by their attitude towards the events in Dublin how deeply Redmond had made his mark. Almost without exception Unionist papers refrained from any attempt to identify Nationalist Ireland generally with the rising: they did full justice to the valour and the sufferings of Irish troops—who, indeed, at that very moment were passing through a cruel ordeal. In that Easter week the Sixteenth Division was subjected to two attacks with poison gas of a concentration and violence till then unknown, and under weather conditions which prolonged the ordeal beyond endurance. The 48th and 49th Brigades had very terrible losses. We of the 47th relieved them in the line.

That was a long tour of trenches, some eighteen days beginning on the 29th of April, and throughout it papers came in with the Irish news. I shall never forget the men's indignation. They felt they had been stabbed in the back. For myself, I thought that a situation had arisen in which Irish members who were serving had a more imperative duty at home, and I went to discuss the matter with Willie Redmond, whose battalion was then holding the front line to the left of Loos.

I found him in the deep company commander's dug-out in the bay of line opposite Puits 14 bis, which will be known to many Irish soldiers. We came up to the light to talk, and he agreed with me in my view. We arranged that each of us should discuss with his commanding officer the question of asking for special leave. Mine advised me to go, and I have no earthly doubt that his would have said, or did say, the same; but Willie Redmond never brought himself to leave his men. Next month, however, he was invalided back, very seriously ill.

But in our talk that day, when we discussed the possibility of our having some special influence, he said this: "Don't imagine that what you and I have done is going to make us popular with our people. On the contrary, we shall both be sent to the right about at the first

General Election." I think he was wrong, at least to this extent, that any man who served would not have lessened his chance by doing so. When the tide flowed strongest against us, in three provinces one Nationalist only kept his seat—John Redmond's son, Major William Archer Redmond.

## II

Already the tide had begun to turn in Ireland. On May 11th Mr. Dillon—who had been in Dublin during the rebellion—moved the adjournment of the House to demand that Government should state whether they intended to have more executions upon the finding of secret tribunals, and to continue the searches and wholesale arrests which were going on through the country. The list of executions had now reached fourteen, and no word of evidence had been published. Also the Prime Minister stated that he heard for the first time of the shooting of Mr. Sheehy-Skeffington and others by Captain Bowen Colthurst. Unquestionably, discussion was urgently needed, and Mr. Dillon was fully justified in emphasizing the mischief done in Ireland by alienating men's minds. But Mr. Dillon spoke as one who felt to the uttermost the passion of resentment which he depicted, and in his indignation against charges which had been brought against the insurgents, he was led to praise their conduct almost to the disparagement of soldiers in the field. Even in print the speech seethes with growing passion; and its delivery, I am told, accentuated its bitterness and its anti-English tone.

It would be futile to deny that this utterance had a great effect in Ireland and in England, or to conceal Redmond's view that the effect was most lamentable. But it had one notable result. Mr. Asquith, in replying, announced his intention to visit Ireland and look into

the situation for himself. Within a fortnight—on May 25th—he reported to the House his impressions.

“The first was the breakdown of the existing machinery of the Irish Government; and the next was the strength and depth, and I might almost say, I think without exaggeration, the universality of the feeling in Ireland that we have now a unique opportunity for a new departure for the settlement of outstanding problems, and for a joint and combined effort to obtain agreement as to the way in which the Government of Ireland is for the future to be carried on.”

He indicated that an attempt would be made to renew negotiations for a settlement which would enable the Home Rule Act to be brought into operation at once; and that Mr. Lloyd George had consented to undertake the task of reconciling parties. But he begged that there should be no debate upon this proposal or upon Irish affairs at all. Redmond, in accepting, said that the request for acceptance without discussion was putting the goodwill of Nationalists to a very severe test.—A discussion would at once have produced this criticism: that Ireland would say to-morrow, “The Parliamentary party brought to Ireland a post-dated order for Home Rule, liable to an indefinite series of postponements: Sinn Féin by a week’s rebellion secures that Home Rule shall be brought into force at once.”

In truth, the rapid growth of Sinn Féin from May 1916 onwards is due largely to this reasoning; but also to resentment against the Government’s dealing with the rebellion, and against the Irish party’s silence in Parliament in spite of the numerous actions of the military power which called for vigorous criticism.

Irish Nationalist members realized the unpopularity of their silence and submitted to it, for the negotiations appeared to offer a real chance. We held that Mr. Lloyd George could not afford to fail, and had power enough to carry through a settlement. We did not know, and



could not, that the Minister of Munitions had been called off from his regular work within five weeks before the beginning of the offensive on the Somme, for which an unprecedented outlay of material had been undertaken.

The negotiations proceeded, and were conducted on the principle of discussion through a go-between. The parties never met: Mr. Lloyd George submitted proposals to each side separately. Redmond and his colleagues insisted on protecting themselves by securing a written document, so that, as it was hoped, there could be no understanding and the terms come to would be final.

Those of us who hoped for a completely new approach to the problem were doomed to disappointment. The affair was taken up where the Buckingham Palace Conference left it. The terms to be arranged were terms of exclusion for Ulster; and the two questions of defining the area and the period met the negotiators on the threshold.

It has been shown above that Redmond regarded as vital the distinction between temporary and permanent exclusion. His purpose was to stamp the whole of this proposed agreement with a provisional and transient character. It was to be simply a war measure, subject to re-arrangement at the close of hostilities; and it was to be adapted to a community still agitated by rebellion.

An Irish Parliament with an Executive responsible to it was to be set up at once. But no elections were to be held. The existing members for the existing constituencies were to be the provisional Parliament till the war ended.

The same considerations precluded the possibility of a referendum in Ulster. Nationalists accepted an area defined by agreement. It left out of "Ulster" the three counties, Donegal, Cavan and Monaghan, in whose eight constituencies no Unionist had been returned since 1885. But it left to the excluded area the counties of



Tyrone and Fermanagh, each with a Nationalist majority, and the boroughs of Newry and Londonderry, both represented by Home Rulers.

This was a provision which no body of men could be expected to acquiesce in permanently as representing the equity of the case. It was accepted for the sake of peace, as a temporary expedient. A strong inducement was added by Mr. Lloyd George's proposal that at the close of the provisional period the whole matter should be referred to a Council of the Empire with the Prime Ministers of the Dominions taking a hand in the settlement. But to guarantee and seal its provisional and transitory character an extraordinary clause was added. Until a permanent settlement was reached, the Irish membership at Westminster was to remain at its original number of 103.

The document embodying these conclusions was accepted in identical terms by each side, and each party of negotiators set out for Ireland to endeavour to secure acceptance of it. But before he left London Sir Edward Carson asked for an interpretation of the terms. Did the agreement mean that none of the six excluded counties could be brought under a Dublin Parliament without an Act of Parliament? In other words, was the exclusion permanent until Parliament should otherwise determine? He was answered that the Prime Minister accepted this interpretation, and would be prepared to say so when the matter came before Parliament. Knowledge of these communications was not conveyed to Redmond. Redmond's interpretation was that at the termination of the war this arrangement lapsed, and the Home Rule Act, which was the law of the land, came into force. If Ulster, or any part of it, were to be excluded, it must be by a new amending Act. Had the assurance given to Sir Edward Carson been conveyed to Redmond, either the negotiations must have been resumed or they must have been rendered abortive.

On June 13th the Ulster Council accepted the terms, no doubt with great reluctance. The signatories to the Covenant in the three western counties felt themselves betrayed. The whole body found itself committed to acceptance of Home Rule in principle for twenty-six counties. But the war necessity was pressed upon them and they submitted.

The Nationalist Convention met ten days later in Belfast. Mr. Devlin had been strenuous in his exertions throughout the province, but the whole force of the ecclesiastical power was thrown against him. Apart from the detestation of partition, the Catholic Church conceived that the principle of denominational education would be lost in the severed counties, where the dominant Presbyterian element was opposed to it. Very many delegates came to the Convention pledged in advance to resist the proposals: and the general anticipation was that Redmond would be thrown over.

The proceedings were secret. But in the result the Nationalists of the North refused to be any party to denying the rest of Ireland self-government. A division was taken, and consent to temporary exclusion was carried by a large majority. The victory was in the main due to Mr. Devlin's extraordinary personal gifts, exercised to carry a conclusion which inevitably must injure himself where he was most sensitive to a wound, in the hearts of those among whom he was born and bred.

It must have been in the weeks immediately after this that Redmond spoke to me, as I never heard him speak of any other man, his mind about Mr. Devlin. "Joe's loyalty in all this business has been beyond words," he said. "I know what it has cost him to do as he has done." He knew well that the younger man's influence had been more efficacious than the threat of his own resignation—which was not withheld. A man of other nature might have been jealous of the young and growing power: but such an element as this was so foreign to

Redmond's whole being that even the thought of it never entered the most suspicious mind.

The result of the Belfast Convention was communicated and discussed at a meeting of the Irish party held at the Mansion House on June 26th. It was one of the most hopeful moments in our experience; reaction from a depression approaching to despair gave confidence to the gloomiest among us. Hope was in the air. The effect of Mr. Asquith's sentence upon the whole machinery of Dublin Castle had not yet worn off. No new Government had been installed: the Chief Secretaryship remained vacant, the Lord-Lieutenant also had retired from his office. It seemed a certainty that we should enter, under whatever auguries, into the realization of a self-governing Ireland. Even those who were most enthusiastic for the birth of a new and glorious era that was to date from the stirring action of the rebels, and who were most open-mouthed in condemnation of Redmond's futile efforts, in practice shared our view. I asked one such man how he counted on securing the necessary first step of establishing an Irish Government. "Oh, I suppose," was his answer, "the Irish party will manage that somehow."

But soon delay began to hang coldly on this temper of anticipation, and to delay were added disquieting utterances. On June 29th Lord Lansdowne announced in the House of Lords that the "consultations" which had been taking place were "certainly authorized" by the Government but were not binding upon it; and that he, speaking for the Unionist wing of the Cabinet, had not accepted the proposals. This was disturbing. Lord Selborne had retired from the Government before the negotiators went to Ireland, because he knew of the proposals and was not prepared to sanction them. We assumed that other Unionists who shared this view would have followed him in his frank action. Now we perceived that Lord Lansdowne and his friends had frugally hus-

banded their force. It was expected by many that Ireland would do the work for them. Failing that, they had still the last stab to deliver. But we counted upon one thing: that Mr. Lloyd George, if not Mr. Asquith, would feel himself committed to see the deal through—and that his resignation would have to be faced as a part of the consequences if attempts were made to go back on the bargain.

Parliament reassembled and still nothing was said and nothing done: but the Press was full of rumours. On July 19th Redmond asked that a date should be fixed for the introduction of the proposed Bill, and next day he renewed his demand, urging that the constant delays and postponements were “seriously jeopardizing the chance of settlement.” This was only too true. A furious agitation against the proposal of even temporary partition was raging through Ireland. Once more, the tide had been missed: time had been given to inculcate all manner of doubts and suspicions—and once more the suspicions proved to be only too well justified. The whole story was revealed to the House on July 24th.

Redmond, in his speech, emphasized it that the proposals had come not from the Nationalists, but from the Government; they had, however, been accepted, after considerable negotiation and many changes in substance, as a plan which Nationalists could recommend for acceptance. Nationalists had been pressed to use the utmost despatch, had been told that every hour counted and that it was essential in the highest Imperial interests, if Ireland endorsed the agreement, that it should be put into operation at once. “That is two long months ago,” he said. Action had been taken; the unpopularity of the proposals, fully foreseen, had been faced, on a clear understanding.

“The agreement was in the words of the Prime Minister himself, for what he called a provisional settlement which should last until the war was over, or until



a final and permanent settlement was arrived at within a limited period after the war. This was the chief factor of this plan, and without it not one of my colleagues or myself would for a moment have considered it, much less have submitted it to our followers."

The retention of Irish members at Westminster in full strength was covenanted for "as an indispensable safeguard of the temporary character of the whole arrangement."

It was on this construction of the agreement that consent to it had been secured, in the face of very strong and organized opposition: and consent was secured to it as a final document. Nevertheless, when Redmond arrived in London he had been at once confronted with a demand for modifications—of which the first were unimportant. Yet to consent to any alteration was a sacrifice of principle; but he was told that this concession would secure agreement in the Cabinet. Later, however, came a public statement from Lord Lansdowne that "permanent and enduring" structural alterations would be introduced into the Home Rule Act. Redmond had seen the draft Bill in which the Government's draftsmen embodied the terms of the agreement, and he had accepted this, as conforming to his covenant. In reply to Lord Lansdowne, he had pressed for the production of this Bill, but could not get it. The end was that, after a Cabinet held on July 19th, he was told that "a number of new proposals had been brought forward"; that the Cabinet did not desire to consult him about these at all; and on the 22nd Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Herbert Samuel were instructed to convey to him the Cabinet's decision, with an intimation that there would be no further discussion or consultation. That decision was to make the exclusion of six counties permanent, and to withdraw the provision for retaining Irish members at full strength during the transitory period.

Redmond attacked no individual. His anger was beyond words. He said this, however:



“Some tragic fatality seems to dog the footsteps of this Government in all their dealings with Ireland. Every step taken by them since the Coalition was formed, and especially since the unfortunate outbreak in Dublin, has been lamentable. They have disregarded every advice we tendered to them, and now in the end, having got us to induce our people to make a tremendous sacrifice and to agree to the temporary exclusion of these Ulster counties, they throw this agreement to the winds, and they have taken the surest means to accentuate every possible danger and difficulty in the Irish situation.”

That day really finished the constitutional party and overthrew Redmond's power. We had incurred the very great odium of accepting even temporary partition—and a partition which, owing to this arbitrary extension of area, could not be justified on any ground of principle; we had involved with us many men who voted for that acceptance on the faith of Redmond's assurance that the Government were bound by their written word; and now we were thrown over.

Apart from the effect on Redmond's position, the result was to engender in Ireland a temper which made settlement almost impossible. No British Minister's word would in future be accepted for anything; and any Irishman who attempted to improve relations between the countries was certain to arouse anger and contempt in his countrymen.

More particularly the relations between Irish members and the most powerful members of the Government were hopelessly embittered. Mr. Lloyd George put aside completely—probably he never for a moment entertained—the thought of seriously threatening resignation because his agreement with the Irish was repudiated by his colleagues. He was entirely engrossed with the work of the War Office, where he thought, and was justified in thinking, himself indispensable. Mr. Asquith, whose object was to keep unity in his Government at all costs,

when it came to a choice whether to quarrel with the Irish who formed no part of it, or with the Unionists who were his colleagues, had no hesitation which side to throw over.

I have never seen the House of Commons so thoroughly discontented and disgusted. There was much genuine sympathy with Redmond. Sir Edward Carson evidently shared it, and he made a conciliatory speech in which he proposed that he and the Nationalist leader should shake hands on the floor of the House. That is a gesture which comes better from the loser than from the winner, and there was no doubt that Sir Edward Carson had won. But he knew Ireland well enough to realize the meaning of his victory, and his speech indicated disquiet and even horror at the prospect before us. He was quite avowedly anxious to see a start made with Home Rule, Ulster standing apart. In a later debate, when the Government announced its intention to fill again the vacant Irish offices (appointing Mr. Duke as Chief Secretary), Redmond referred hopefully to this utterance of the Ulster leader and generally to "the new and improved atmosphere which has surrounded this Irish question quite recently."

The end of this speech dealt with one of the elements which had contributed most to the improvement. In the great battle of the Somme, which opened on July 1st, the Ulster Division went for the first time into general action, and their achievement was the most glorious and the most unlucky of that day. They carried their assault through five lines of trenches, and, because a division on their flank was not equally successful, were obliged to fall back, adding terribly in this withdrawal to the desperate losses of their advance. Side by side with them on the other flank was the Fourth Division, containing two battalions of Dublin Fusiliers, in one of which John Redmond's son commanded a company; so that he and the Ulstermen went over shoulder to shoulder. He came back unwounded; all other company commanders

in the battalion were killed. The only thing in which Redmond was entirely fortunate during these last years of his life was in his son's record during the war.

Another Nationalist well known to the House of Commons served also in the Dublin Fusiliers on the Somme, with a different fortune. Professor Kettle, owing to conditions of health, had been unable to come to France with the Sixteenth Division, and had been mainly employed in recruiting. Now in these summer months he pushed hard to get out to France, though he was not physically fit for the line. He got to France, and, as was easy to foresee, broke down and was sent to work at the base on records: but before he left his regiment he knew that it was under orders for a general action, and he insisted that he should have leave to rejoin for that day. He came back accordingly, found himself called on to take command of a company, and led it with great gallantry, and on the second day of action was shot dead. It was the fate that he expected; he, like so many, had a forerunning assurance of his end. So was lost to Ireland the most variously-gifted intelligence that I have ever known.

The Sixteenth Division were still on the sector about Loos, and their casualties were heavy and continuous in the perpetual trench warfare. With the last days of August they were withdrawn—for a rest, as they believed at first; but their march was southwards to the Somme.

The purpose was to use them for an attack on Ginchy; but a shift of arrangements brought the 47th Brigade into line against Guillemont and its quarries, which had on six occasions been unsuccessfully attacked. The Irish carried them. Three days later the whole division was launched against Ginchy. They equalled the Ulstermen's valour, and were luckier in the result. For these achievements praise was not stinted. Colonel Repington in *The Times* described the Irish as the "best missile troops" in all the armies.

## III

The deeds of Irish soldiers helped us greatly outside of Ireland ; in Ireland, the news was received with mingled feelings. There was passionate resentment against the Government, and the question was asked, For what were their men dying ? Redmond's answer could not be so confident as it would have been six months earlier. There were many who said that he dare not face the country. His answer to this was given at Waterford, where on October 6, 1916, his constituents received him with their old loyalty—though now for the first time there were hostile voices in the crowd. He spoke out very plainly, saying with justice that in all his life he had never played to the gallery and would not now. Things had to be looked at squarely.

“ We have taken a leap back over generations of progress, and have actually had a rebellion, with its inevitable aftermath of brutalities, stupidities and inflamed passions.”

He would impugn no man's motives, least of all the motives of the dead ; but those who had set this train of events in motion had been always the enemies of the constitutional movement. The constitutional movement must go on, he said ; but it would be folly to pretend that it could go on as if nothing had happened. Ireland must face its share in the responsibility. But the real responsibility rested with the British Government.

To establish this he entered on a review of the whole series of circumstances, not omitting Ulster's preparations for civil war, and stressing heavily the mischief that was done when Sir Edward Carson was chosen “ by strange irony ” to be the First Law Officer of the Crown.

Passing from his review, he issued grave warning against the idea of conscription : it would be resisted in every village and its attempted enforcement would be a scandal which would ring through the world. For Ireland also



he had admonition. He had told them before that Home Rule was an impregnable position. But "no fortress is impregnable unless the garrison is faithful and united."

This, alas! was already a counsel of perfection for a country so deeply divided in opinion as Nationalist Ireland had come to be. The old loyalties had gone—and he felt it. Ending on a personal note, he referred to his age: he was over sixty; he had done thirty-five years of work which would have broken down any man less robust in constitution than it had been his luck to be born. He believed in youth, he said, and would gladly give way to younger men.

"But one thing I will not do while I have breath in my body. I will not give way to the abuse and calumny and the falsehoods of men whom I have known for long years as the treacherous enemies of Ireland."

With all his reticence, he was a sensitive man; and for months now he could scarcely take up a newspaper, except his party's official organ, without finding himself accused of imbecility, of idle vanity, of corrupt bargaining, of every unworthy motive. Worse than all, he realized the inherent weakness of his position. He told his hearers at Waterford that the Irish party would not vary its attitude upon the war, but that we should now become a regular and active opposition. He was far too experienced not to be aware that during a war—and such a war—he neither could nor would offer to the Government in power opposition in the sense in which Nationalist Ireland would understand the word.

But he took steps at once for raising the Irish question by a direct vote of censure. On October 18th he moved:

"That the system of Government at present maintained in Ireland is inconsistent with the principles for which the Allies are fighting in Europe, and has been mainly responsible for the recent unhappy events and for the present state of feeling in that country."

His speech avoided all controversial reference to what



had preceded the war, but it reviewed with great power the long series of blunders, beginning with the delay in putting the Home Rule Bill on the Statute Book, and ending with the Cabinet's destruction of the agreement entered into in June. Now, as the end of all, Dublin Castle, after the Prime Minister's description of its hopeless breakdown, was set up again with a Unionist Chief Secretary and a Unionist Attorney-General; with a universal system of martial law in force throughout the country, and with hundreds of interned men in prison on suspicion. He warned the Government of the inevitable effect upon the flow of recruits for the Irish Divisions; and in a passage which showed how close his attention was to all this matter of recruitment, he pressed the War Office for certain minor concessions to Irish sentiment which would help us to maintain the Division that had so greatly distinguished itself at Guillemont and Ginchy.

But the real pith of his speech was political in the larger sense. He pressed upon the House the injury which England's interest was suffering through the alienation of American opinion, and through the reflection of Irish discontent in Australia; he pleaded for the withdrawal of martial law. Nothing came of the debate, except a speech in which Mr. Lloyd George admitted the "stupidities, which sometimes almost look like malignancy," that were perpetrated at the beginning of recruiting in Ireland. The Labour men and a few Liberals voted for our motion. But as a menace to the Government it was negligible.

I was in France during the period of intrigue which followed, leading up to the displacement of Mr. Asquith. When the change occurred, members of Parliament who were serving were recalled by special summons. I found Redmond in these days profoundly impressed with the strength of Mr. Lloyd George's personal position. He was convinced that the new Premier could, if he chose,

force a settlement of the Irish difficulty, and was very hopeful of this happening. Sir Edward Carson dared not, he thought, set himself in opposition; at this moment the Ulster party was not popular, while there was in the House a widespread feeling that Redmond in particular had been treated in a manner far other than his due. Another of his brother's interventions in debate gave an impetus to this sympathy.

Again in a thin House, during some discussion on Estimates, Willie Redmond got up and spoke out of the fullness of experiences which had profoundly affected his imagination. He told the House of what he had seen in Flanders, where the two Irish Divisions had at last been brought into contact, so that the left of the Ulster line in front of Ploegstreet touched the right of ours in front of Kemmel. It had always been said that the two factions would fly at each other's throats: by a score of happy detailed touches the soldier built up a picture of what had actually happened in the line and behind the line, and then summed it up in a conclusion:

"They came together in the trenches and they were friends. Get them together on the floor of an Assembly, or where you will, in Ireland, and a similar result will follow."

Then, from this theme, he passed to one even more moving—the fate of Irish Nationalists, who were confronted daily with evil news of their own land. "It is miserable to see men who went out with high hearts and hopes, who have acquitted themselves so well, filled with wretchedness because their country is in an unhappy condition." He appealed for a new and genuine attempt to set all this right; and he eulogized once more with warm eloquence the conduct of the troops, Ulstermen and the rest alike. Raw lads, who eighteen months before had never thought of seeing war, had come in before his eyes bringing prisoners by the hundreds from the most highly trained soldiery in Europe.

Man after man, when Willie Redmond had ended, rose

and thanked him ; but the most notable words came from Mr. Bonar Law :

“ His name and his action, in connection with that of the leader of his party, stand out as a landmark for all the people of this country as to what is being done by those who represent Nationalist feeling.”

All this increased Redmond's hopes of what might be expected from the new Premier, the representative of another small nationality, whose early days in Parliament had linked him almost more closely with Irish Nationalists than with British Liberalism. I was on the upper bench when Mr. Lloyd George came in, amid loud cheering. “ Look at him,” said Willie Redmond (his senior in the House by ten years), who sat beside me : “ It seems only the other day he was sitting over here cheering like mad for the Boers ; and there he is now, Prime Minister.”

But Mr. Lloyd George's speech, which had been deferred for several days owing to illness, was long before it came to Ireland, and then its tone was no way hopeful. He referred back to the negotiations of June and July, with their “ atmosphere of nervous suspicion and distrust, pervasive, universal, of everything and everybody.”

“ I was drenched with suspicion of Irishmen by Englishmen and of Englishmen by Irishmen and, worst of all, of Irishmen by Irishmen. It was a quagmire of distrust which clogged the footsteps and made progress impossible. That is the real enemy of Ireland.”

No one could say that the transaction to which Mr. Lloyd George was referring had helped to destroy distrust : and in view of the opinion held by Irishmen—and not by Irishmen only—of Ministers' dealing with Ireland, it was natural that this passage should provoke the resentment which was evident in Redmond when he rose.

He followed Mr. Asquith, and made it clear that Ireland did not keep its praises for the rising star. He commended in weighty words the patriotism, the reticence

and the magnanimity of the dispossessed leader ; he renewed Ireland's expression of gratitude for the service done in the Home Rule Act ; then, turning to the new power, he told Mr. Lloyd George bluntly that his words would be received in Ireland with the deepest disappointment. This was to be a Ministry of quick and effective decisions ; but so far as our question was concerned, they had shown every disposition to wait and see. Was Ireland only to be let drift ? Two courses might be taken—the statesman's, of real remedy ; the politician's, of palliatives. Even of the latter nothing had been said. Martial law could be removed ; untried men could be released from jail. Yet there was no sign. The Prime Minister intervened angrily. He had been ill, he said. Redmond was in no way inclined to accept the reason as sufficient, and again Mr. Lloyd George rose to say that it was “ not merely unfair, but a trifle impolitic ” not to give him a couple of days to consult with the Chief Secretary.

Still Redmond maintained his tone of aggression. A radical reform was needed, and of those things that must be borne in mind the first was that time was of the essence of success. Promptness was essential. Secondly, Government must take the initiative themselves ; they must not seek to evade their responsibility by putting the blame on other shoulders (this was his rejoinder to the allegation of paralysing distrust) ; there was no use in resuming negotiations, going to this man and to that man to see what he would be willing to take. Thirdly, the problem must be approached by a different method ; it must be dealt with on lines of a united Ireland. The time had gone by, in effect, for any proposals of partition, temporary or permanent.

He added a caution that there must be no attempt to mix up the problem of an Irish settlement with conditions about recruiting or conscription. “ That question must be left to a change of heart in Ireland.” In con-



clusion he expressed to the House of Commons—though in no sanguine accents—what he had expressed to me a fortnight earlier in private talk: his belief that the time was “ripe for drastic, decided and bold action” by the Prime Minister. Powerful influences were at Mr. Lloyd George’s back—in the Press of all parties, in the opinion of leading men of all parties. Three-quarters of the House of Commons, Redmond said, would welcome such action: the whole of the overseas Dominions would be for it; and it would have “the sympathy of all men of good will in the Empire.”

For the first time I noticed lack of cordiality in the response of the House—not from want of agreement, but from a profound depression. The old temper of bickering had revived, especially between some of our party and those who disagreed with them. One was glad to get back to France for Christmas, even in that grim winter.

When I was invalided back in February, I found that things had not stood still in Ireland. Redmond’s suggested palliative had been applied, and the deported persons were let back home for Christmas. But this produced little easing of the situation, and within a few weeks Government rearrested several of them.

One, however, Count Plunkett, was still in Ireland when a vacancy occurred in Roscommon. He was not in himself a likely man to appeal to that constituency. He had been an applicant for the Under-Secretaryship at Dublin Castle, and was therefore clearly not a person of extreme Nationalist views. But one of his sons, a young poet, had been among the signatories to the proclamation of an Irish Republic, and had paid for it with his life; Count Plunkett stood really as the father of his son. He was returned by a very large majority. This was the first open defeat inflicted by the physical force men on the Constitutional party since the beginning of Parnell’s day.



In March, Redmond desired to bring the Irish question again before Parliament, and Mr. T. P. O'Connor introduced a motion calling on the House "without further delay to confer upon Ireland the free institutions long promised her."

That debate will always be remembered by those who heard it for one speech. Willie Redmond was among the oldest members of the Parliamentary party; not half a dozen men in all the House had been longer continuously members; he had always been one of the most popular figures at Westminster and in Ireland; and he had always spoken a great deal. Yet he had never been in the front rank either as a speaker or as a politician. The humour and the wit which made him the joy of groups in the smoking-room on the occasions when he was in full vein of reminiscence never got into his set speeches—though no man oftener lit up debate with some telling interruption. He was often merely rhetorical; he had the name—though in my experience he never deserved it—for being indiscreetly vehement. His early reputation, which he had never lived down, is not unkindly represented by a story which he used to tell against himself. When the first Home Rule Bill was introduced he had a great desire to speak in the debate, and went to Parnell with his request. "Will you promise," said Parnell, "that you will write out what you are going to say, and show it to me, and say that and no more?" He promised, and handed in his manuscript. Days went by and he heard nothing, so he went back to the Chief. "Ah yes," said Parnell, "I have it in my pocket. An excellent speech, my dear Willie. If I were you I shouldn't waste it on the House of Commons. It's too good for them."

Later, in the days from 1906 onwards, with all his experience, it cannot be said that he ever affected opinion in the House. What he said was the common stuff of argument: it was all what someone else might have

said—until the war came. Then, he was a changed creature. He went through in the Army the same experience as hundreds of other members of Parliament; but he and he only seemed to have got the very soul out of it. He took to his soldier's duty as a religion: he saw all that concerned him in the light of it. It has been told already how his two speeches on almost casual occasions affected public feeling: but in them he was chiefly an Irish member of Parliament speaking about soldiers and about Irish soldiers. In this debate he was an Irish soldier pleading with Parliament for Ireland in the name of Irish soldiers—who had responded to the call to arms because, as he said, they were led to believe that a new and better and brighter chapter was about to open in the relations of Great Britain and Ireland.

“I do not believe that there is a single member of any party in this House who is prepared to get up and say that in the past the government and treatment of Ireland by Great Britain have been what they should have been. Mistakes, dark, black, and bitter mistakes, have been made. A people denied justice, a people with many admitted grievances, the redress of which has been long delayed. On our side, perhaps, in the conflict and in the bitterness of contest, there may have been things said and done, offensive if you will, irritating if you will, to the people of this country; but what I want to ask, in all simplicity, is this, whether, in face of the tremendous conflict which is now raging, whether, in view of the fact that, apart from every other consideration, the Irish people, South as well as North, are upon the side of the Allies and against the German pretension to-day, it is not possible from this war to make a new start?—whether it is not possible on your side, and on ours as well, to let the dead past bury its dead, and to commence a brighter and a newer and a friendlier era between the two countries? Why cannot we do it? Is there an Englishman representing any party who

does not yearn for a better future between Ireland and Great Britain ? There is no Irishman who is not anxious for it also. Why cannot there be a settlement ? Why must it be that, when British soldiers and Irish soldiers are suffering and dying side by side, this eternal old quarrel should go on ? . . . .

“ If there ought to be an oblivion of the past between Great Britain and Ireland generally, may I ask in God’s name the First Lord of the Admiralty [Sir Edward Carson] why there cannot be a similar oblivion of the past between the warring sections in Ireland ? All my life I have taken as strong and as strenuous a part on the Nationalist side as my poor abilities would allow. I may have been as bitter and as strong in the heated atmosphere of party contests against my countrymen in the North as ever they have been against me, but I believe in my soul and heart here to-day that I represent the instinct and the desire of the whole Irish Catholic race when I say that there is nothing that they more passionately desire and long for than that there should be an end of this old struggle between the North and the South.

“ The followers of the right honourable gentleman the First Lord of the Admiralty should shake hands with the rest of their countrymen. I appeal to the right honourable gentleman here in the name of men against whom no finger of scorn can be pointed ; in the name of men who are doing their duty ; in the name of men who have died ; in the name of men who may die, and who at this very moment may be dying, to rise to the demands of the situation. I ask him to meet his Nationalist fellow-countrymen and accept the offer which they make to him and his followers, and on the basis of that self-government which has made, and which alone has made, the Empire as strong as it is to-day, come to some arrangement for the better government of Ireland in the future.

“ Why does the right honourable gentleman opposite not meet us half way ? I want to know what is the

reason. It surely cannot be that the right honourable gentleman and his friends believe that under a system of self-government they would have anything to fear. Nothing impressed me more than the opinion I heard expressed by a high-placed Roman Catholic officer who is in service with the Ulster Division, when he told me of his experience there, and when he said that although he was the only one of the Catholic religion in that Division, it had dawned upon him that they certainly were Irishmen and were not Englishmen or Scotsmen.<sup>1</sup> The right honourable gentleman knows perfectly well that it would not take so very much to bring his friends and our friends together, and I ask him why the attempt is not made? I ask him whether the circumstances of the time do not warrant that such an attempt should be made? I ask him whether he does not know in his inmost heart that it would bring to the common enemy more dismay and consternation than the destruction of a hundred of their submarines if they knew that England, Scotland and Ireland were really united, not merely within the confines of the shores of these islands, but united in every part of the world where the Irish people are to be found?

“What is it that stands in the way of Ireland taking her place as a self-governing part of this Empire? Ireland is the only portion of the Empire now fighting which is not self-governing. The Australians whom I meet from time to time point to their government being free; the Canadians and the New Zealanders do the same, and we Irishmen are the only units in France to-day taking our part in the war who are obliged to admit that the country we come from is denied those privileges which have made the Empire the strong organization

<sup>1</sup> This might mislead. The exclusively Protestant character of the Ulster Division was not maintained in France, and it came to include many Catholic Irishmen in the rank and file and not a few among the officers—all in equal comradeship.—S. G.



which it is to-day. If safeguards are necessary—I speak only for myself, and I do not speak for anybody else on these benches, because I have been away from this House so long that I have almost lost touch with things—as far as my own personal opinion goes, there is nothing I would not do, and there is no length to which I would not go, in order to meet the real objections or to secure the real confidence, friendship and affection of my countrymen in the North of Ireland.

“For my own part, I would gladly, if it would ease the situation, agree to an arrangement whereby it might be possible for His Majesty the King, if he so desired, to call in someone at the starting of a new Irish government, a gentleman representing the portion of the country and the section of the community which the First Lord represents; and if a representative of that kind were placed with his hand upon the helm of the first Irish Parliament, I, at any rate, as far as I am concerned, would give him the loyal and the strong support which I have given to every leader I have supported in this House. After all, these are times of sacrifice, and every man is called upon to make some sacrifices. Men and women and children alike have to do something in these days, and is it too much to appeal to the right honourable gentleman and his friends to sacrifice some part of their position in order to lead the majority of their countrymen and to bring about that which the whole English-speaking world desires, namely, a real reconciliation of Ireland? I apologize for having detained the House so long, but this is a matter upon which I feel strongly, and I feel all the more strongly about it because I know that I am trying altogether too feebly, but as strongly as I can, to represent what I know to be the wishes nearest to the hearts of tens of thousands of Irishmen who went with me and their colleagues to France, many of whom will never return, all of whom are suffering the privations and the hardship and the



risk and the wellnigh intolerable circumstances of life in France. I want to speak for these men, and if they could all speak with one voice and with one accord, they would say to this House, to men in every part of it, to Conservatives, Liberals and Labour men, to their Nationalist countrymen and to their countrymen from the North of Ireland: In the name of God, we here who are about to die, perhaps, ask you to do that which largely induced us to leave our homes; to do that which our fathers and mothers taught us to long for; to do that which is all we desire: make our country happy and contented, and enable us, when we meet the Canadians and the Australians and the New Zealanders side by side in the common cause and the common field, to say to them, 'Our country, just as yours, has self-government within the Empire.' "

I have given the speech almost in full as it stands in print after the opening paragraph. But I cannot give the effect of what was heard by a densely crowded House in absolute silence. It was not an argument; it was an appeal. There was not a cheer, not a murmur of agreement. They were not needed, they would have been felt an impertinence, so great was the respect and the sympathy. As the speaker stood there in war-stained khaki, his hair showed grey, his face was seamed with lines, but there was in every word the freshness and simplicity of a nature that age had not touched. In his usual place on the upper bench beside his brother, he poured out his words with the flow and passion of a bird's song. He was out of the sphere of argument; but the whole experience of a long and honourable lifetime was vibrant in that utterance. He spoke from his heart. All that had gone to make his faith, all the inmost convictions of his life were implicit—and throughout all ran the sense in the assembly who heard him, not only that he had risked, but that he was eager to give his life for proof. It was not strange that this should be so,

for he was going on what he believed would be his last journey to France; and when he reached the supreme moment of his passion with the words "In the name of God, we here who are about to die, perhaps," the last word was little more than a concession to the conventions.

It was a speech, in short, that made one believe in impossibilities; but in Parliament no miracles happen. Mr. Lloyd George replied, as John Redmond expected—declaring that the Government were willing to give Home Rule at once to "the parts of Ireland which unmistakably demand it," but would be no party to placing under Nationalist rule people who were "as alien in blood, in religious faith, in traditions, in outlook from the rest of Ireland as the inhabitants of Fife or Aberdeen." No Liberal Minister had ever before so completely adopted the Ulster theory of two nations. Taxed with the refusal to allow Ulster counties to declare by vote which group they belonged to, he declined to discuss "geographical limitations" at present, but indicated that if Irish members could accept the principle of separate treatment for two peoples, there were "ways and means by which it could be worked out." Suggestion of a Conference of Irishmen was thrown out, or of a Commission to discuss the details of partition. Redmond, in replying, answered to this that "after experience of the last negotiations he would enter into no more negotiations." He warned the Government that the whole constitutional movement was in danger. There were in Ireland "serious men, men of ability, men with command of money," who were bent on smashing it.

"After fifty years of labour on constitutional lines we had practically banished the revolutionary party from Ireland. Now again, after fifty years, it has risen."

The rest was a prophecy only too accurate:

"If the constitutional movement disappears, the Prime Minister will find himself face to face with a revolutionary movement, and he will find it impossible to preserve

any of the forms even of constitutionalism. He will have to govern Ireland by the naked sword. I cannot picture to myself a condition of things in which the Prime Minister, with his record behind him, would be an instrument to carry out a government of that kind. . . . I say this plainly. No British statesman, no matter what his platonic affection for Home Rule may have been in the past, no matter what party he may belong to, who by his conduct once again teaches the Irish people the lesson that any National leader who, taking his political life in his hands, endeavours to combine local and Imperial patriotism—endeavours to combine loyalty to Ireland's rights with loyalty to the Empire—anyone who again teaches the lesson that such an one is certain to be let down and betrayed by this course, is guilty of treason, not only to the liberties of Ireland but to the unity and strength and best interests of this Empire."

After these bitter words he called on his colleagues not "to continue a useless and humiliating debate," but to withdraw from the House: and we accordingly followed him into the lobby. In our absence the discussion continued, in a tone not flattering to the Government. It was remarkable for one utterance from Mr. Healy, concerning Redmond:

"I wish to say at the outset that in my opinion this Empire owes him a debt of gratitude which it can never repay, and I wish also to say of him as an opponent that in my opinion, if his advice had been taken by the War Office, it is absolutely true, as he contends, that you would have marshalled in Ireland from two hundred thousand to three hundred thousand men, from whom large drafts could have been drawn; and I will further say I believe if his advice had been taken the elements of rebellion would have been appeased."

It was plain that matters could not stay at this point; but our breach with the Government was complete for the moment. Redmond's demand was for a full and

definite statement of policy, which should be made in the House of Commons and there discussed. On May 15th Mr. Bonar Law announced that the Prime Minister would make a communication to the leaders of Irish parties. It was explained that this method of outlining the proposals would be only preliminary to discussion.

On that evening a great banquet to General Smuts was given in the House of Lords by Parliament. Strong pressure was used with Redmond to attend it, and he consented unwillingly. He was ill—physically ill, probably with the beginnings of his fatal disease—and morally sick at heart and out of hope. Another Irish election in South Longford had been strenuously fought by the party and had been won by the Sinn Féiner; a decisive factor in the election was the issue of a letter from Archbishop Walsh which grossly misrepresented Redmond's whole policy and action. He was in no humour for banquetings, and at this moment the Irish party was nearly back at its old attitude, which dictated a refusal to have part or lot with the House on such ceremonial occasions.<sup>1</sup> But Redmond's feeling for South Africa was specially strong, his feeling about the war was unchanged; and this was a recognition of a great South African statesman's services in the war. He let himself be persuaded into accepting.

At the dinner he sat next to a Liberal peer, a member of the late Government, who talked with him of Irish possibilities. Redmond did not know what the Government intended. He was told, now, that the Government had written a letter to him and to Sir Edward Carson setting out plainly an offer for the immediate introduction of Home Rule with the exclusion of the six counties.

Redmond said: "It is impossible that we should accept; nothing can come of it." He was asked then

<sup>1</sup> We had never been parties, for instance, to receptions of Prime Ministers from the overseas Dominions, even when they were our close friends and supporters.

what hope he saw. He answered, as he had for some time been saying in private, that the only chance lay in a Conference or Convention of Irishmen ; but it must include everybody, and in no sense be limited to discussion between the Irish party and the Unionists. The Liberal peer expressed great interest and proved it in action. Next morning he was with Redmond by ten o'clock, and got his view in writing that it might be placed before the Cabinet, who were to meet at eleven to decide finally the terms of their letter.

As a result of this intervention, the letter, instead of containing a single proposal, offered two alternatives : the second was so oddly tacked on that many at the time said it read like a postscript. So, in point of fact, it was. That was the genesis of the Irish Convention.

His son, from whom I know this, said to me that more than once, when things were hopeful in the Convention, Redmond said to him, "What a lucky thing it was I went to that dinner!"



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE CONVENTION AND THE END

#### I

THE Longford election had in reality been not merely a symptom, but an event of great importance. It was a notice of dismissal to the Parliamentary party. There was no reason to suppose anything specially unfavourable to us in the local conditions. Neither candidate made a special appeal to the electors; nor was the constituency in any sense a stronghold of Sinn Féin. The fact was that the country as a whole had ceased to believe in the Parliamentary party as an efficient machine for obtaining the national ends. The organization of the United Irish League had lost touch with the young; the main support we had lay in the Ancient Order of Hibernians, which many Nationalists disliked on principle because it was limited to Catholics. What had not yet disappeared up till July 1916, though it was threatened, was belief in the principle of constitutional action as against revolutionary methods.

Willie Redmond, who never lacked instinct, and whose separation from party politics by conditions of service gave him a vantage-ground of detachment, reached a shrewd view of the position before the Longford vacancy occurred. He pressed upon his brother that we should all retire, saying plainly that we had been too long in possession, and should hand over the task of representing Ireland at Westminster to younger men. His association with the Volunteer Committee, brief though it was, had made him more aware than most of our colleagues how

wide was the estrangement between us and the new Ireland; but it also taught him to believe that many of the men whom he had met there would be willing to take up the task on constitutional lines.

This proposal never came before the party. But after Longford had given its decision, it was proposed that we should accept the verdict in general and resign in a body. Those who put forward the suggestion felt that some drastic action was needed to force upon Ireland the responsibility for a clear choice between the two courses, constitutional and unconstitutional. Redmond, as Chairman, advised strongly against this. He said that it would be a lack of courage: that one defeat or two defeats should not turn us from our course. But it is clear to me that he welcomed the Convention as another and a better means of effecting the same end—of replacing the existing Parliamentary party by another body of men.

On May 21st Mr. Lloyd George's speech gave the go-by completely to the detailed proposal for a settlement on the basis of partition to which the Cabinet—including Sir Edward Carson—had consented. It dealt only with the alternative plan suggested in the conclusion of the published letter. The Government had decided to invite Irishmen to put forward their own proposals for the government of their country, he said. This invitation was directed to a Convention not merely of political parties, although they must all be represented—the followers of Redmond, of Mr. O'Brien, the Ulster Unionists, the Southern Unionists, "and he hoped also the Sinn Féiners as well." But in the main it was to consist of "representatives of the local governing bodies, of the Churches, of the trade unions, of the commercial interests, of educational interests"; it was to be "a real representation of Irish life and activity in all their leading branches." It was to be pledged in advance to no conclusions—except one, and that was only indicated by implication. "If substantial agreement should be reached

as to the character and scope of the Constitution for the future government of Ireland within the Empire" (these three words were the limitation), Government would "accept the responsibility for taking all the necessary steps to enable the Imperial Parliament to give legislative effect to the conclusions of the Convention."

A recommendation was added, amounting to a direction, that the Convention should sit with closed doors and publish nothing of its proceedings till their conclusion.

Nothing was said to define the all-important words "substantial agreement." But the Prime Minister laid grave emphasis on the importance of a settlement for the purpose of the war. The limitation upon Ulster's claim was plainly conceived by him to lie in Ulster's sense of an Imperial necessity. "The Empire cannot afford uncured sores that sap its vigour. The entire strength of Great Britain and the whole-hearted support of Ireland are essential to victory." He appealed "to Irishmen of all faiths, political and religious, and especially to the patriotic spirit of Ulster, to help by healing."

Redmond, in following him, assumed that there would be concurrence from all sections of Irishmen. It must be "a free assembly"—no proposal must be barred in advance: it must be representative of "every class, creed and interest"—and in recapitulating these, he added the Irish peers. In regard to political parties and bodies, as such, he desired a very limited representation. The United Irish League, "the militant official organization of the Irish party," should be unrepresented, and he advised the same in regard to other purely political organizations and societies. For the Irish party itself he asked a representation only equal in number to that given to Irish Unionists. The Cork Independents must have what they considered a full and adequate number; and for Sinn Féin he asked "a generous representation."

Then he added:

"So anxious am I that no wreckers, mere wreckers,

should go on that body—I do not believe any men would go on as wreckers, but any men who would be regarded by their opponents as going on it as wreckers—that on the question of personalities, I would be very glad, if there are protagonists on one side or the other who during the last twenty or thirty years or more have been engaged in the struggle and who—there have been faults on both sides—have done things and said things which have left bitter memories, I should be very glad that such men should be left off. If there were any feeling that I am such a man myself, I would be only too willing and happy to stand down” (he was interrupted by cries of “No, No”) “if by doing so I could promote harmony.”

In this there was a genuine expression of the desire which governed his whole conduct in the Convention, to get away from the old lines with their old traditional antagonisms, and refer the solution not to Irish politicians but to Ireland as a whole. What followed in his speech gave positive development to the self-denying ordinance which he had proposed for the party machines. He asked for a nominated element—first, to make sure that men obviously suitable, who none the less might not happen to be elected, should find a place: and secondly, to increase still further the Unionist representation.

He added once more a plea for quick action; dilatoriness had had much to do, he said, with the Government's late failures in Ireland. But, if prompt steps were taken on the path outlined, he would, in spite of all that had come and gone, face the new venture with good heart. Yet even in his confidence there was the pathetic accent of one who feels need to bid defiance to despair.

“Although I know I lay myself open perhaps to ridicule as too sanguine a prophet, I have some assured hope that the result may be blessed for Ireland as for the Empire. . . . The life of a politician, especially of an Irish politician, is one long series of postponements and compromises and disappointments and disillusion. . . . Many

of our cherished ideals, our ideals of complete, speedy and almost immediate triumph of our policy and of our cause, have faded, some of them almost disappeared. And we know that it is a serious consideration for those of us who have spent forty years at this work and now are growing old, if we have to face further postponements. For my part, I feel we must not shrink from compromise. If by this Convention which is now proposed we can secure substantial agreement amongst our people in Ireland, it will be worth all the heartburnings and postponements and disappointments and disillusiones of the last thirty or forty years."

The omens were not favourable to this storm-beaten courage. When he sat down, Sir John Lonsdale rose to reiterate on behalf of the Ulster Unionists that they "could not and would not be driven into a Home Rule Parliament"—and that they relied absolutely on the pledges that they should not be coerced. Mr. William O'Brien followed. After years of advocating settlement by conference among Irishmen, he condemned this proposal as coming six or seven years too late, and as defective in its machinery, in that it proposed a large body of men: "A dozen Irishmen of the right stamp" would be the proper Conference; and the proposal of partition should be barred out in advance. If the experiment were tried now and failed, the failure would "kill any reasonable hope in our time of reconstructing the constitutional movement upon honest lines." Ireland is always fruitful in Cassandras who do not lack power to assist in the fulfilment of their ill-bodings, and this speech foreshadowed Mr. O'Brien's intention to abstain. Sir Edward Carson and Mr. Devlin gave the debate a more promising tone: but it was difficult for anybody to be sanguine.

Preparation, discussion, went on in private and in public. It was soon indicated that Sinn Féin would take no part, on the double ground, first, that the Convention was not elective in any democratic sense, for all the repre-



sentatives of local bodies had been elected before the war, before the rebellion, before the new movement took hold in Ireland; and secondly, that it was committed in advance to a settlement within the Empire. On the other hand, Redmond was flooded with correspondence concerning candidates for membership of the new body. There was also the question of a meeting-place. The Royal College of Surgeons offered its building with its theatre, possessing admirable facilities. But Trinity College offered the Regent House. The conveniences here were in all ways inferior; but Trinity was the nearest place to the old Parliament House; much more than that, it was the most historic institution in Ireland. Its political associations of the past and the present were strangely blended and Redmond liked it none the less for that. He decided to press for acceptance of this offer.

Then across the current of all our thought came the news of the Battle of Messines. Troops had been massing for some time on the sector of line which the Irish Divisions had now held since the previous October; and the day was plainly in sight which had been expected since spring, when they were to try and carry positions in front of which so much blood had been vainly shed. On June 7th, at the clearing of light, all was in readiness: the Ulstermen and ours still in the centre of the attack from Spanbroekmolen to Wytschaete. Just before the moment fixed, men could see clearly: in half a minute all was blotted out. The eighteen huge land-mines in whose shafts our second line had been so often billeted were now at last exploded and the sky was full of powdered earth, with God knows what other fragments. In that darkness the troops went over.

For once staff-work and execution harmonized perfectly; the success was complete, and the sacrifice small. The Irish raced for their positions, and no one could say who was first on the goal. News of the victory quickly reached London—great news for Ireland. Australians

and New Zealanders had their full share in it, but the shoulder to shoulder advance of the two Irish Divisions caught everyone's imagination: it was Ireland's day.

Then came through the message that Willie Redmond had fallen.

Ever since his illness in the previous summer he had been taken away from his work as company commander; at his age—fifty-six—he was probably the oldest man in any capacity with the Division. A post was found for him on General Hickie's divisional staff which made him specially responsible for the comforts of the men, in trenches and out of trenches. In the battles on the Somme he entreated hard to be let rejoin his battalion, but General Hickie issued peremptory orders which did not allow him to pass the first dressing-station. Here, indeed, he was under terrible shell fire and saw many of his comrades struck down; but he was not content. For this new battle he insisted that he must be in the actual advance. If he were refused leave, he said he would break all discipline and take it. He was permitted to be with the third attacking wave; but he slipped forward and joined the first, on the right, where the line touched the Ulstermen. So it happened that when he fell, struck by two rifle bullets, the stretcher-bearers who helped him and carried him down to the dressing-station were those of an Ulster regiment. He was brought back to the hospital in the convent at Locre, familiar to all of us by many memories; for the nuns kept a restaurant for officers in the refectory, and he and I had dined there more than once with leading men of the Ulster Division. His wounds were not grave; but he had overtaxed himself, and in a few hours he succumbed to shock. It was the death that he had foreseen, that he had almost desired—a death that many might have envied him. He had said more than once since the rebellion that he thought he could best serve Ireland by dying; and in the sequel, so deep was the impression

left by his death that it seemed at times as if his thought had been true.

Yet one aspect of it was overlooked by many—the loss inflicted on his brother, the Irish leader. It was not merely that Redmond lost the sole near kinsman of his generation; he lost in him the closest of those comrades who had been allied with him in all the stages of his life's fight. The veterans of the old party had been vanishing rapidly from the scene; name succeeded name quickly on our death-roll. This death left Redmond lonely, and sorely stricken in his affections. But it did more. It deprived him of a counsellor, and perhaps the only counsellor he had who temperamentally shared his own point of view. More especially now in the war, when the leader's wisdom in giving the lead which he had given began to be gravely questioned even by his own supporters, it was invaluable for him to have backing from one who had taken the war as part of his life's creed—who knew no hesitancies, no reserves in his conviction that the right course had been followed, for the right thing was to do the right. Finally and chiefly, Willie Redmond was the only man who could break through his brother's constitutional reserve and could force him into discussion. In the months that were to come such a man was badly needed. The loss of him meant to John Redmond a loss of personal efficiency. Sorrow gave a strong grip to depression on a brooding mind which had always a proneness to melancholy, which was now linked with a sick body, and which lived among disappointments and grief and the sense of rancorous dislike in men who once thought it a privilege to cheer him on his passing.

Add to all this that Redmond's one hope for Ireland now lay in the Convention, and that he counted with good reason on his soldier brother's influence there—as no man could fail to do who had seen the effect which his last speech produced upon the House of Commons.

No doubt, however, part of the service which Willie Redmond rendered to Ireland in dying lay in the sympathy which he conciliated to his leader—in whom men saw, rightly, not only his nearest kinsman, but the representative of the principles for which the soldier-politician died. The sympathy was genuine and it was widespread ; yet so reserved was John Redmond that few, I think, guessed how deeply the blow had struck home. Still less did they realize how much was meant by the bereavement which followed immediately. Pat O'Brien, who had been through all vicissitudes the faithful and devoted helper of his friend and leader, was suddenly prostrated by a stroke. He came down to the House again ; he could not keep away from the place of his duty, where for a quarter of a century he had scarcely missed one division in a hundred, where he had kept watch for Redmond like the most trusty sheep-dog ; but death was written over him and it came in a few days. He was the one friend, I believe, whom Redmond would have taken with him to Aughavanagh after Willie Redmond's death. Now, Aughavanagh, which had been a place of rest, was a place of intense loneliness. Yet to Aughavanagh Redmond had withdrawn himself, like a wounded creature ; and from Aughavanagh he came to Dublin for Pat O'Brien's funeral in Glasnevin. Then, and then only in his lifetime people saw him publicly break down ; he had to be led away from the grave.

Meanwhile, he was beset by ceaseless correspondence concerning the numbers and composition of the assembly to which the British Government on his suggestion had decided to entrust so great a charge. But a startling political event indicated only too plainly how much belated that decision had been.

Directly the proposal for a Convention had been disclosed, with its attempt to create a new atmosphere, it was put to the Government that Sinn Féin could not be expected to take part in the Convention while its



leaders were in jail or under detention as suspects. This representation came from several quarters, and it was soon publicly pleaded by the Nationalist party; but it was, to my knowledge, immediately put forward by English members of Parliament, the prime mover being a Unionist soldier, Major J. W. Hills, M.P. As usual, the advantage of prompt action was urged; and as usual, the concession was delayed till it had lost its grace and seemed to be extracted. Sinn Féin's opinion in all these days was hardening against the Convention, which was represented as a mere trick to gain time and to conciliate American good will by an unreal offer.

When the prisoners were released, a new personage immediately came into the public eye. It was certain that one of them would be nominated to contest the vacancy in East Clare left by Willie Redmond's death; the choice fell on Mr. de Valera; and the world learnt that in these months while the imprisoned Sinn Féiners had been discussing their plans for the future—for the right of association as political prisoners had been conceded to them—this young man had been recognized by his fellows as the leading spirit. Ireland as a whole knew nothing of him. He was the son of a Southern American and a county Limerick woman; scholarly, a keen Gaelic Leaguer, by profession a teacher of mathematics. In the rebellion he had held Boland's bakery, a large building covering the approaches to Dublin from Kingstown by rail; he had been the last of the leaders to surrender, and had earned high opinions by his conduct in these operations. This was the Sinn Féin candidate for East Clare—a county where "extreme" men had always been numerous.

The view was expressed that he should have been opposed by one who took up the cause where Willie Redmond left it—by a soldier who was a strong Nationalist and strongly identified with the Parnellite tradition. It was decided that we should stand a better chance if



constitutional Nationalism were represented by a Dublin lawyer with close personal ties to the constituency. How it would have gone had a soldier been put up, no man can say; but it could not have gone worse. Mr. de Valera won by a majority of five thousand. He was a stranger, but he stood for an ideal. The alternative ideal—which was John Redmond's and Willie Redmond's—had never been put before the electors. The election was, rightly, taken as a repudiation of Redmond's policy; but in it Redmond's policy had gone undefended.

The newly elected Sinn Féin leader was very prominent in these days, and a good deal of his eloquence was spent in ridicule of the Convention. That body was certainly starting its task under the most unpromising auspices.

## II

The first meeting was fixed for July 25. On the evening before, Redmond came up and there was an informal discussion between the Nationalist members of Parliament and the Catholic Bishops. There were four of each group. Five members had been allowed to the party and as many to the Ulstermen. Redmond was not present at the meeting when selection was made, but he recommended a list, consisting in addition to himself of Mr. Dillon, Mr. Devlin, and Mr. Clancy, K.C.—the latter having been always his most trusted adviser in all points of draftsmanship and constitutional law. My name was added in the place which should have been his brother's, as representing Irish troops.

Mr. Dillon, however, thought it better not to serve, though Redmond pressed him very strongly to do so. He considered he could best help the Convention from outside its ranks. Mr. O'Brien and Mr. Healy had, on different grounds, come to the same conclusion, so that

we lacked the assistance of three commanding personalities in Irish life, though we were thereby freed from some dangers of personal friction. A vacant place was thus left in our five, and since the Ulster party had decided to put in only two members of Parliament, filling the other places with local men, it was thought well that we should take a similar representative, Mr. Harbison, who spoke for the county of Tyrone.

Of the four representatives of the hierarchy, Archbishop Harty of Cashel had always been a downright outspoken supporter of the Parliamentary party. He had publicly denounced the rebellion both on civil and on moral grounds. But he had never been prominently concerned with political affairs as such; nor had the Bishop of Down and Connor, Dr. MacRory, a man young for his office and not long in it. He had been chosen, no doubt, to guard the special interests of Catholicism in the north-east corner. The others were of a very different stamp; no two in Ireland had a better right to the name of statesmen. Dr. O'Donnell, the Bishop of Raphoe, had been for many years officially one of the treasurers of the United Irish League. Since the foundation of the Congested Districts Board, he had been one of its members, and served on the Dudley Commission which inquired into these regions. His native Donegal could show the traces of his influence in applying remedial measures to what was once its terrible poverty. Dr. Kelly, the Bishop of Ross, came from the extreme south of the same western coast-line; a keen student of finance and economics, he had been a member of the Primrose Committee on Financial Relations, and, before that, of Lord George Hamilton's Commission on the Poor Law. His repute was great in his own order and outside his own order. In any assembly these two brains would have been distinguished.

The question which was discussed among us chiefly on that evening concerned the choice of a chairman.

Government had originally proposed to nominate this all-important officer, but having failed to solve the interminable difficulties, had left it to the assembly. Much trouble was anticipated by the public. On the whole, our conclusion pointed, but not decisively, to the choice which was eventually made. Redmond swept aside peremptorily the suggestion of himself.

Next day we assembled—some ninety persons. The main bulk consisted of local representatives—thirty-one chairmen of County Councils, one only having declined to serve. Two of these, Mr. O'Dowd and Mr. Fitzgibbon, were members of our party. There were eight representatives of the Urban Councils, over and above the Lord Mayors of Dublin, Belfast and Cork and the Mayor of Derry. Labour had seven representatives, one of whom, Mr. London, representing the Agricultural Labourers' Union of the South, was an Irish member of Parliament. One was a railway operative from Dublin; one a Catholic Trade-Unionist leader from Derry; the remaining four came from Belfast. Organized labour in Dublin and the Southern towns had endorsed Sinn Féin's attitude and declined to recognize the Convention.

The Southern Unionist Group was led by Lord Midleton; with him were Lords Mayo and Oranmore, representing the Irish peers. The Irish Unionist Alliance had sent Mr. Stewart, a great land-agent, and Mr. Andrew Jameson (whose name, as someone said, was "a household word written in letters of gold throughout Ireland"). The Chambers of Commerce had their representatives from Dublin, Belfast and Cork.

In the Ulster group, Mr. Barrie, M.P., acted as leader, Lord Londonderry as secretary. Of the rest, Sir George Clark, chairman of Workman and Clark's great ship-building yard, had been known to us in Parliament. A Scot by birth, with a life of thirty years spent in Belfast, during which time he had seen his business grow from two hundred hands to ten thousand, he knew nothing

of Ireland but Belfast, and had no trace of Irish feeling. In this he stood alone ; but unhappily no man carried more weight in Belfast—with the possible exception of one whom few of us outside Ulster knew before we came to that body. Mr. Alexander McDowell was a solicitor by profession, the adviser of policy to all the business men of Belfast. From the first day of our meeting he stood out by sheer weight of brain and personality. He was to some of us the surprise of that assembly, and made us realize how little part we had in Ulster when the existence of such a man could be an unknown factor to us.

Mr. Pollock, President of the Belfast Chamber of Commerce, was also new to us, and was destined to play a prominent part in our affairs. With the Catholic prelates sat the two Archbishops of the Church of Ireland—Dr. Crozier and Dr. Bernard—to both of whom the democratic constitution of their Church had given great experience in management of business and discussion. Dr. MacDermott, Moderator of the Presbyterian General Assembly, was the official head of his Church for the year only and had not equal knowledge of administration. An orator, with a touch of the enthusiast in his temperament, he was a simple and sympathetic figure ; vehement in his political faith, yet responsive to all the human charities and deeply a lover of his country. There was no better representative there of Ulster, of the Ulster difficulty—at once so separate from and so akin to the rest of Ireland.

The Government nominees included, as was only natural, the most personally distinguished group. First of them should be named the Provost of Trinity, Dr. Mahaffy, under whose ægis we assembled—a great scholar and a great Irishman. He brought with him an element of independent unregimented political thought—often freakish in expression, but based on a vast knowledge of men and countries. In a more practical sense,



Lord MacDonnell and Lord Dunraven were our chief political theorists, devisers by temperament of constitutional machinery. Lord MacDonnell's repute as an administrator, Lord Dunraven's as a leading figure in the Land Conference, gave weight to whatever came from them. Lord Granard, who sat with them, was a Catholic peer who had commanded a battalion of the Royal Irish Regiment in the Tenth Division and had held offices in Mr. Asquith's Government. He had now the brilliant idea of reopening for the period of the Convention one of the most beautiful eighteenth-century dwellings, Ely House, and making it a centre of hospitality and a meeting-place for friendly outside intercourse. Few more useful assistances were rendered to our purpose, and certainly none more pleasant.

Lord Desart, a distinguished lawyer, acted closely with Lord Midleton. Sir Bertram Windle, President of University College, was another of Government's choices—a man of science who was also very much a man of affairs. Another, far less of a debater, far more of a power, was Mr. William Martin Murphy, Chairman of the Dublin Tramways, a powerful employer of labour who had headed the fight against Larkin in 1913, and had been mainly responsible for the character of the employers' victory. He was the owner of the most widely circulated Irish paper, the *Irish Independent*—which stood in journalism for what Mr. Healy represented in Parliament—an envenomed Nationalist opposition to the Parliamentary party.

Mr. Edward Lysaght, the son of a great manufacturer in South Wales, combined like his father an aptitude for literature and for business; he wrote books, he was concerned in a publishing venture, but he was chiefly interested in his farm in county Clare—where he had voted for de Valera. He had been chosen deliberately as a link with Sinn Féin. It stamped an aspect of the Convention that he was the youngest man there—for



he would not have been noticeably young in the House of Commons. We were a middle-aged assembly. Another link, though not so explicit, with Republican Ireland was Mr. George Russell, "A.E.," poet, writer on co-operative economics, a mystic, with all a mystic's shrewdness, an orator with much personal magnetism. Lastly, there was Sir Horace Plunkett, perhaps the only member of the Convention except Redmond whose name would have occurred to every Irishman as indispensably necessary.

Two other personages should be noted. Mr. Walter MacMurrough Kavanagh, Chairman of the Carlow County Council, was by tradition and training a strong Unionist, by inheritance the representative of one of the old Irish princely families. He had been elected to the Vice-Chairmanship of his County Council while still a Unionist ; later, he adhered to Lord Dunraven's proposals of devolution, but finding no rest in a half-way house, came into full support of Redmond and for some time was a member of our party ; by temperament deeply conservative, he was in no way separated by that from many of the ablest Nationalists, lay and ecclesiastic. As a speaker he had few equals in the Convention ; no man there, indeed, except Redmond, could throw equal passion into the plea of urgency for a settlement, for I think no other man felt it with such earnestness.

Captain Doran, Chairman of the Louth Council, was on his way back to France when the summons to the Convention stopped him. A Methodist, he was divided by religion from his neighbours in County Louth : but that did not stop them from putting this prosperous and capable farmer, working his land on the most modern methods, into the Chair of their County Council. Before the war, when the Larne gun-running took place, he decided that matters looked serious, called his friends together and formed a company of Volunteers, who might be needed to protect themselves or to protect other Nationalists across the adjacent Ulster border.

After the war had broken out and the Home Rule Act was passed, and Redmond had launched his appeal, this country farmer, then aged fifty, made his way to Mallow and asked General Parsons to accept him as a recruit. He was accepted, and very shortly given a commission in the Dublin Fusiliers. Out of his local Volunteers he took seventy-five into the Army with him. He was with the Sixteenth Division from its landing in France till after the day of Messines, commanding his company. All this gave him an authority in an assembly where all voices were in support of the war, and more particularly in an appeal to Ulster; and with this advantage went an unusual gift of frank and eloquent speech, linked with a fine idealism.

These were the main personal elements in the group that came together on July 25th—Mr. Duke, the Chief Secretary, acting as temporary Chairman and Sir Francis Hopwood (soon to become Lord Southborough) having been brought over as Secretary. Mr. Duke having addressed us with an earnest suavity, we were told to select a Chairman: and on the motion of the Primate, Archbishop Crozier, this embarrassing task was delegated to a committee of ten, rapidly told off. We adjourned for lunch, and on reassembling found that a unanimous recommendation named Sir Horace Plunkett. The Ulstermen had expressed a willingness to accept Redmond. This he refused to discuss; but he was put into the Chair of the selecting committee. There was a recommendation also that Sir Francis Hopwood should be Secretary to the Convention. Both these proposals were welcomed, and we dispersed feeling that we had done a good day's work.

There was, however, one set-off to it. When the Selection Committee had done its work, its members went off singly, and outside the gate of College a small group of ardent patriots were waiting, who mobbed Redmond on the way to his hotel. They were young,

no doubt ; but the Republican party claimed specially the youth of Ireland ; and these lads expressed with a simple eloquence very much what was said by older and more articulate voices, uttering the same thought in print. It is worth while to illustrate here the attitude taken towards Redmond by much of Nationalist Ireland, for it profoundly influenced Redmond's attitude and action in the Convention. I take, not casual and partisan journalism, but a passage from a book published by a distinguished Irish writer who had never publicly attached himself to any party. Mr. James Stephens was in Dublin during the insurrection ; he wrote a book about his own personal observation of it, which as a record of observation is admirable. But when Mr. Stephens comes to emit opinions, here is what he has to say :

“ Why it happened is a question that may be answered more particularly. It happened because the leader of the Irish party misrepresented his people in the English House of Parliament. On the day of the declaration of war between England and Germany he took the Irish case, weighty with eight centuries of history and tradition, and he threw it out of the window. He pledged Ireland to a particular course of action, and he had no authority to give this pledge and he had no guarantee that it would be met. The ramshackle intelligence of his party and his own emotional nature betrayed him and us and England. He swore Ireland to loyalty as if he had Ireland in his pocket and could answer for her. Ireland has never been disloyal to England, not even at this epoch, *because she has never been loyal to England*, and the profession of her National faith has been unwavering, has been known to every English person alive, and has been clamant to all the world beside.

“ Is it that he wanted to be cheered ? He could very easily have stated Ireland's case truthfully, and have proclaimed a benevolent neutrality (if he cared to use the grandiloquent words) on the part of this country.

He would have gotten his cheers, he would in a few months have gotten Home Rule in return for Irish soldiers. He would have received politically whatever England could have safely given him. But, alas! these carefulnesses did not chime with his emotional moment. They were not magnificent enough for one who felt that he was talking not to Ireland or to England, but to the whole gaping and eager earth, and so he pledged his country's credit so deeply that he did not leave her even one National rag to cover herself with.

"After a lie, truth bursts out, and it is no longer the radiant and serene goddess we knew or hoped for—it is a disease, it is a moral syphilis, and will ravage until the body in which it can dwell has been purged. Mr. Redmond told the lie, and he is answerable to England for the violence she had to be guilty of, and to Ireland for the desolation to which we have had to submit. Without his lie there had been no Insurrection, without it there had been at this moment, and for a year past, an end to the 'Irish question.' Ireland must in ages gone have been guilty of abominable crimes, or she could not at this juncture have been afflicted with a John Redmond."

Politicians everywhere need to grow tough skins; but Redmond, though he was a veteran in politics, had no special gift that way. It was not pleasant for the Nationalist leader, when an assembly of Irishmen were called together to attempt the framing of a Constitution, to find himself the object, and the sole object, of public insult; it was not pleasant for him to feel that he might at any time be subjected to a renewal of this experience in the streets of Ireland's capital, where he had been acclaimed as a hero so few years ago. It was not pleasant for him to feel that whenever he took up a book or paper dealing with Ireland he was liable to come upon some outburst such as the one which I have quoted. These things were pin-pricks, yet pin-pricks administered in



public ; and the mere effort to endure such things without wincing saps a man's vitality. Behind them lay the definite repudiation of his policy in election after election—for Kilkenny City followed the example of Clare and replaced Pat O'Brien by a Sinn Féiner. He was repudiated in the eye of the world, and repudiated with every circumstance of contumely. Plainly in the Convention he could no longer claim to speak for Ireland ; that limited gravely his power to serve.

I think, however, that deep in his heart a resentment, all the more rankling because he gave it no voice, prompted him to be on his guard against lending the least colour of justification to any plea that in the Convention he had sought to pledge Ireland without due mandate or had committed anyone but himself. All that was personal in his resources—his labour, his experience, his judgment, his eloquence—all this he put unreservedly at the Convention's service : but he abstained, and I think not only out of policy but as the result of silent anger, from making the least use of that authority which he still possessed and which he might easily have augmented. If in the result he took too little upon him, lest anyone should ever say he had taken too much, and if because he left too much to others Ireland was the loser, Ireland must bear not the loss only but the blame.

Many even of those who most agreed with his action had, under the influence and events of these years and of public comments on these events, lost confidence in him. Some weeks after the Convention assembled, a very able priest said to me that he regarded Redmond as "a worn-out man." The genuineness of his regret was proved by the delight with which he heard what I could tell him. Never in my life did I find so much cause for admiration of Redmond as in the early stages—which were in many ways the most important—of our meetings. Never at any time did I know him exert so successfully his charm of public manner. At the second day's meeting,



when the new Chairman took up his place and function, there were several small points to be settled, each capable of creating friction ; and it has to be admitted that in the technical aspect of his duty Sir Horace Plunkett did not shine : business quickly became involved. Fortunately he was of a temper to welcome help, and it was quickly to hand. Archbishop Crozier showed himself to be accomplished, resourceful, and most tactful on all points of procedure : and Redmond then for the first time did with extraordinary skill what he had to do at many stages later. By a series of questions to the Chair he suggested rather than recommended a way of clearing the involved issue ; and all this was done with a precision of phrase which was none the less exact because it was easy, and with a dignity which was none the less impressive because it had no pretence to effect. His mastery both of the form and substance of procedure was conspicuous. One of the ablest among the Southern Unionists said to me in these days : “ He is superb : he does not seem able to put a word wrong.”

I think that the secret of his happiness of manner lay simply in this, that within the Convention he was happy. There was a note in it that I never felt in the House of Commons, even when he was at his best. There he always spoke as if almost a foreigner, no matter among how familiar faces. Here he was among his own countrymen, and for the first time in his life in an assembly in no way sectional. For from the first it was plain that, by whatever means, there had been gathered a compendium of normal, ordinary Irish life : farmer, artisan, peer, prelate, landlord, tenant, shopkeeper, manufacturer—all were there in pleasantly familiar types. The atmosphere was unlike that of a political gathering ; it resembled rather some casual assemblage where all sorts of men had met by accident and conversed without prejudice. Everybody met somebody whom he had known in some quite different relation of life and with whom he had never

looked to be associated in any such task as the framing of a Constitution. It was all oddly haphazard, full of interest and surprises; all of us were a little out of our bearings, but much disposed to reconnoitre in the spirit of friendly advance.

After the first day of Sir Horace Plunkett's chairmanship there was an adjournment of something like a fortnight to give the Chairman and secretariat time for preparation: and in this interval a plan of action was formed. The object in view was to avoid the danger of an immediate break and to give play to the reconciling influences. It was decided to begin by a prolonged process of general discussion, in which men could express their minds freely without the necessity of coming to an operative decision on any of the controversial points, until the value of each could be assessed in relation to the possibility of a general agreement.

The plan adopted was to discuss, without division taken, the schemes which had been submitted by members of the Convention and by others. Members would propose and expound their own projects: for the exposition of the others some member must make himself responsible.

At this "presentation stage" and at all stages, Redmond absolutely declined to put forward a plan in his own name. This was not only from temperamental reasons: there was an official obstacle. He was an individual member of the Convention: but he was Chairman of the Irish party, pledged not to bind it without its consent. He felt, no doubt, that any detailed proposal from him would be taken as binding the party, whom he could not consult without bringing them into the secrets of the Convention.

But this attitude of self-abnegation was pushed very far by him, and perhaps too far. In his early utterances he deprecated all official recognition of sections. Yet from the moment when committees came to be appointed this recognition was claimed; and from the first the

Ulster group maintained a compact organization. They had their own chairman, Mr. Barrie, and their secretary; they secured a committee-room for their own purposes; they voted solidly as one man. All this, though we did not know it at first, was dictated by the conditions of their attendance. They were pledged to act simply as delegates, who must submit every question of importance to an Advisory Committee in Belfast—behind which again was the Ulster Unionist Council. They had therefore no freedom of action and were of necessity extremely guarded in speech.

The Southern Unionists, including the representatives of the Irish peers, were also organized as a group; but they came to the Convention with much fuller powers. They felt themselves bound to consider, and in certain conditions to consult, those whom they represented; but they were free to originate suggestions, and individually each man expressed his own view. But they too had their meeting-place and their frequent consultations.

The handful of Labour men also met and discussed action, though they were not organized as a group and did not feel pledged to a joint course. Each, according to his own lights, represented the interests of Labour. Still, they met.

The only group which had no common centre of reunion was that of the Nationalists—a majority of the whole assembly. This included the representatives of the Irish party and the County and Urban Councillors, all of whom had been returned as its supporters. It included also the four representatives of the hierarchy, every one of whom had been either actually or potentially a part of Nationalist Conventions, and of whom three had been most prominent supporters of the general organization.

But a difficulty existed in the presence of other personages who were in general support of us, but who outside the Convention belonged to a different category. Lord Dunraven was a Home Ruler, but had been no supporter

of the Irish party. Lord MacDonnell stood much nearer to us, but was a power in his own right and had never been a party politician. Mr. Lysaght had voted against us in Clare. Mr. Russell had very often attacked the party on aspects of its general action. Above all, there was Mr. W. M. Murphy, who, like Mr. Healy, had been at one time a member of the Irish party, and whose paper had for long been in nominal support of its purposes, but who had throughout recent years done more than all forces together to discredit and weaken its influence.

All of these five men were Government nominees, as were also Lord Granard and Sir Bertram Windle, who in different ways gave Redmond complete and most useful backing. It would have been possible to call together a group consisting of men who had been members of the national organization which would have excluded all these and included the Bishops ;<sup>1</sup> but Redmond probably felt it would be ungracious to do this. His chief desire was to avoid all recognition of party and still more of partisan machinery. His conclusion was to do nothing ; and it was a conclusion to which he was prone at all times when he did not see his way clear. This temperamental disinclination to take any action which might create difficulties was in these days at its height with him. Since the spring his usually perfect health had been failing ; he suffered from the physical inertia which accompanies the growth of a fatal disease ; and sorrow upon sorrow, rebuff upon rebuff, had weakened the resilience of his mind. It was not that he lacked courage or confidence in his own judgment ; but he was bound as a statesman to make allowance for the estimate which others, his followers, would put upon that judgment when he declared it. Sensitive by nature, he was deeply aware of failure which had resulted from the most disparaging of causes—not flat rejection, but belated, half-

<sup>1</sup> When ultimately we did meet, these were the elements which assembled.



hearted and blundering adoption, of whatever course he had proposed. He overrated, I am sure, the extent to which his personal position had been depreciated in the minds of those who were there. It was true, as the event was to prove, that he could no longer count on unquestioning support of any policy simply on the ground that he advocated it; but any opinion which he presented would have been commended not only by the cogency of his argument but by an old esteem for his wisdom, and, above and beyond this, by a personal feeling. Men would have inclined to his side not for the argument's sake only, but for his sake.

There was felt, too, precisely at the moment when it mattered most, the defect in his quality as leader. He lacked the personal touch. It was not that he would not, but that he could not, put himself into contact with the individual minds of men. He owed it, I think, to the rank and file to give them more of his guidance than they actually received. He was a genial presence when they met; but of confidential discussion upon details I am sure that nothing passed. Had he called the group together, had he spoken his mind to them collectively, in confidence, things would in all ways have been better. But there was ingrained in him a sort of shyness, a repugnance to force his view on others by argument, an indisposition to controversy, which was his limitation; and all this was at this time accentuated by the hurt sense that there would be always in men's minds a memory, not of the hundred times when his wisdom had amply justified itself, but of recent occasions when he had advised them and the result was not what he foretold.

To sum up, then, this criticism—what he said and did publicly in the Convention could hardly by stretch of imagination have been bettered. But outside its sessions he did not handle his team. On the balance, probably, he thought it better to leave them to their own devices; but his temperament weighed in that decision.



As a result, the County Councillors and other local representatives used to hold meetings of their own. They were shrewd and capable men ; but in the matters with which we had to deal the most skilled direction was necessary ; and there was never a man more capable of giving them guidance out of a lifetime's experience than was Redmond, nor one from whom they would have more willingly accepted instruction.

Discussion in the Convention itself was not of great value for the education of opinion, because men naturally were reluctant to get up and state precisely their individual difficulties, which in a confidential interchange of views might have been shown to proceed from some defect in comprehension. The chief value in the debates lay in what they revealed rather than what they imparted. One fact was salient. No Nationalist was prepared to recommend acceptance of the Home Rule Act as it stood, though some of its most vehement assailants adopted great parts of its framework. Broadly speaking, Nationalists wanted for Ireland the powers which were possessed by a self-governing Dominion, but were content to leave all control of defence to the Imperial authority and did not press any demand for a local militia. On the other hand, there was strong insistence on the right of an Irish Parliament to have complete power of taxation within its jurisdiction.

It was manifest that the financial clauses of the existing Act would no longer apply. They were framed in view of a situation which found Ireland contributing ten millions in taxation and costing twelve to administer. Now, less than half the taxation paid the cost of all Irish services and the balance went towards the war.

It was also evident that Nationalists were prepared to make concessions to the minority quite inconsistent with the current democratic view of what a Constitution should be. The Bishop of Raphoe, for instance, expressed willingness to have the Irish peers as an Upper House.

Lord Midleton, however, for the Southern Unionists, insisted that those whom he spoke for must have a voice in the House of Commons—however they got it; and there was general desire to give it them, even by methods which no one could justify for general application.

In short, it became increasingly clear as the debates proceeded that we could come to an arrangement with Unionists if Lord Midleton represented Unionism. But he did not. Ulster was there; and the Ulstermen made it plain that their business was to hear suggestions, not to put them forward. Two facts, however, emerged about Ulster's attitude. The first was that in coming to the Convention the Ulstermen had expected to negotiate on the basis of taking the Home Rule Act as the maximum Nationalist demand. The only compromise which they had contemplated was a mean term between the provisions of that Act and Ulster's demand for a continuance of the legislative Union so far as Ulster was concerned. The second was that Belfast regarded as ruinous to its interests any possibility of a tariff war with Great Britain, and believed that if Ireland were given the power to fix its own customs duties the dominant farming interest would seek to find revenue by new taxation on imports. Hence, the proposal to give Ireland full fiscal powers could not be acceptable to Ulster. Here lay the main rock in our course.

As the discussion proceeded, one category of proposals was summarily dealt with—those which contemplated the setting up of some provincial authority intermediate between the central Parliament, which all postulated, and the existing local bodies in the counties. This policy did not lack advocates. But the County Councillors were solid against it: evidently their private meeting discussed and decided against an expedient which they held would detract from the dignity of the central Parliament and from the dignity of the County Councils. Those who defended it as a plan which might

meet Ulster's difficulty got no backing from Ulster; that group said neither for nor against it. In the rest of the assembly there was a strong feeling against anything that looked like partition or might in public be called partition. Several of us had thought in advance that this was the most likely path to the solution; and looking back, I think it ought to have been much more fully explored. But encouragement was lacking.

Another anticipation proved illusory. We all realized that in the circumstances Ireland could come to a financial arrangement with Great Britain on easier terms than at any time in her history; that to settle at once would be highly profitable; and more particularly, that we could probably secure the completion of land purchase as part of the bargain. It was thought that this argument would appeal to the commercial sense of Ulster. We were met by a resolute reiteration that Ulster considered it Ulster's duty and Ireland's duty to take a full share, equally with the rest of the United Kingdom, in all the consequences of the war—even if it cost them their last shilling; and Ulster speakers denounced our argument as a bribe. Some Nationalists were inclined to discount these protestations, yet I see no reason to doubt their sincerity. At all events, no one disputed that it was to Ireland's interest financially that a settlement should be made.

It is quite unnecessary to summarize here in any detail the course of these general discussions in full Convention, which began on August 21st. One thing, however, resulted from them on which too much emphasis cannot be laid. In the process of "exploring each other's minds," as the phrase went, we came to know and to like one another. Later in the year, a friend of mine, high placed in the Ulster Division, but not an Ulsterman by upbringing or sympathy, came home from France. He told me that the main impression on the minds of Ulster delegates had been made by the Nationalist County

Councillors. They had expected noisy demagogues ; they had found solid, substantial business men, many of them with large and prosperous concerns, all of them rather too silent than too vocal, and all of them most good-humoured in their tolerance of dissent. What Willie Redmond had foretold in his last speech was coming true : Irishmen brought into contact with one another in the Convention, as other Irishmen had been brought into contact in the trenches, and no longer kept apart by those unhappy severances which run through ordinary Irish life, came under the influence of that fundamental fellowship, deeper than all divergence of politics or creed, which draws our people into a sense of a common bond.

The desire to bring delegates together in friendly social intercourse had shown itself in many quarters. The Viceregal Lodge pressed invitations on us, and Redmond, though in the circumstances he himself would go to no entertainment anywhere, expressed his wish that Nationalists should alter their traditional attitude and accept what was offered in so friendly a spirit. But the first place where we met as a body with informal ease was at the Mansion House as guests of the Lord Mayor—a popular figure in our assembly.

Next day the Lord Mayor of Belfast rose at the adjournment to express all our thanks, and to insist that there should be a session in Belfast, where he could return the compliment. Immediately, there came another proposal for a similar visit to the South of Ireland. We went to Belfast at the beginning of September, and the attitude of the Ulster members, which had till then been somewhat guarded and aloof, changed into that of the traditional Irish hospitality. They showed us their great linen mills and other huge manufactories ; they showed us the shipyards, in which the frames of monster ships lay cradled in gigantic gantries, works of architecture as wonderful in their vast symmetry as any cathedral, and having the beauty which goes with any perfect design



combining lightness and strength. Perhaps the most impressive sight of all was the disbandment of workmen from the yards. Endless lines of empty tramcars drawn up on the quay awaited the turn-out of some ten thousand artisans, who streamed past where we stood assembled; and as the crowds swept along, all these eyes, curious, but not unfriendly, scrutinized us, and one word was in all their mouths as they came up—"Which is Redmond? Where's John Redmond?"

A fortnight later Cork completed what Belfast had begun; and, perhaps because Cork is less strenuous, the whole atmosphere there was even friendlier. It had almost the quality of a holiday excursion, for we assisted at the ancient ceremony by which the Lord Mayor of Cork asserts his jurisdiction over the harbour waters—proceeding outside the protecting headlands and flinging from him a ceremonial dart outwards to the sea. This day, however, we accomplished the ceremony well within the limits; we passed the narrow gateway in the chain of mines, but outside that, submarines were a very real menace, and the Admiralty cut short our steamer's voyage. We were none the less festive on board.

It was not all mere holiday in Cork. One speech in particular at this meeting impressed the whole Convention. A Southern delegate illustrated from his personal knowledge how cumbrous and uneconomic were the dealings of a government at Westminster with the meat supply from Ireland; and a mass of complicated and important trade detail was skilfully linked to the larger issue of war interest and Imperial interest; there was genuine eloquence as well as commercial shrewdness in this discourse. A short speech, too, from one of the Ulster County Councillors indicated by its tone, what was in my opinion the general sentiment, that as a result of these preliminary discussions almost everybody in the assembly expected and desired an effective agreement.

At least for the purposes of this book, and perhaps



many purposes, the trend of our debates can be best summarized by reproducing Redmond's main contribution to them. He intervened on the first day when Mr. Murphy's scheme was proposed, on August 21st, but only with a few welcoming words, and to emphasize his view that we were all there to accept whatever commanded most support. But at Belfast on September 5th he spoke fully; and I do not think his speech would have been materially different had he delivered it three weeks later in Cork. What I print here is based on the unusually full notes made by him, so full that they admit of being treated like a press telegram, and read clearly when small and obvious words are added. The manuscript is scored with underlining, single, double and treble, to guide the voice in reading from it; it has interest as illustrating the technical devices which a great orator employed for a special occasion; and for this speech he spared no effort. I thought, then as always, that he was less impressive and less effective in so fully prepared an oration than when he was putting his thought into the form which immediately came to him. But as a document it represents beyond doubt his considered opinion and his most deliberate advice.

Dealing briefly at first with the contention that the system of the Union had been a success and should not be touched, he outlined the familiar arguments. But, as he said, the existence of the Convention was the final answer. The head of a Coalition Ministry had declared, without dissent from any of his Unionist colleagues, that Dublin Castle had hopelessly broken down. The Prime Minister of another Coalition, mainly Unionist in its composition, had set up this assembly, charging it to find another and better system of government.

Beneficent legislation had been quoted. Yes, but how was it attained?

"In any constitutionally governed country, once public opinion is converted to some great reform, it naturally

passes, surely and easily, though perhaps slowly, into law. In Ireland, after Irish public opinion has made up its mind, the reformer has to convert the public opinion of another country which is profoundly ignorant or apathetic, and unhappily it is uncontrovertible that scarcely a single piece of beneficent legislation on land, or anything else, has been passed since the Union except by long, violent, semi-revolutionary agitation.

“Are we to go on for ever upon this path? Are we to go back into the region of perpetual and violent agitation in order to get the reforms we need? Are we never to be allowed to have peace in our country?”

He passed then to the complaint that Ulster's special case had not been sufficiently considered.

“The man who would hope to settle this great problem without special consideration of the special case of Ulster would indeed be a fool. Only for the special case of Ulster we should not be here at all. Our chief business is to endeavour to satisfy that special case.

“For myself, I am one of those Nationalists to whom Mr. Barrie referred, who believe that the co-operation of Ulstermen is necessary for a prosperous and free Ireland, and there are no lengths consistent with common sense and reason to which I would not go to satisfy their fears and doubts and objections.

“The special case of Ulster as put before us was this: ‘We are contented under the Union, we have prospered under the Union. Therefore from our particular standpoint we have no reason to ask for a change.’ But they declare themselves not only Ulstermen but Irishmen. They admit that the rest of Ireland is not prosperous as they are, and is not contented; and, that being so, they have come here in a spirit of true patriotism to see what is proposed as a remedy; and, as I understand it, they only stipulate that in any scheme of reform their rights and interests and sentiments shall be safeguarded and

respected. That is a reasonable and patriotic attitude, and I wish most heartily and most sincerely to respond to it.

“Now let me say what are the main objections to these schemes which have emerged from the debate. Some may be regarded as more particularly affecting Ulster, others as more particularly affecting the Southern Unionists, but all of them taken together make up what I may call the Unionist objection.

“The Archbishop of Dublin grouped these objections under three heads :

1. Imperial Security.
2. Fiscal Security.
3. Security for Minorities.

“On the question of Imperial Security, objection is taken to what is called an ‘Independent’ Parliament.

“It is supposed that what is called Dominion Home Rule implies an ‘Independent’ Parliament. This is a complete delusion. There is only one Sovereign and Independent Parliament in the Empire—the Imperial Parliament ; its supremacy is indefeasible and inalienable. Every other Parliament in the Empire is subordinate, and an Irish Parliament must be subordinate.

“The Imperial Parliament has created many Parliaments and given to them power to deal in general as they wish with local affairs, but it never parted with its own overriding authority—it has no power to do so—and in several of the colonies it has exercised that overriding authority from time to time.

“Gladstone spoke of the Irish Parliament which he proposed to set up as ‘practically independent in the exercise of its statutory functions.’ But the overriding authority of the Imperial Parliament would always be there in the background to arrest injustice or oppression, just as it is in regard to every Dominion Parliament in the Empire to-day.

"That position was specifically laid down and accepted by Parnell in 1886.

"Lord Midleton demands that the rights and authority of the Crown shall be preserved and safeguarded. There is no difference whatever between us on this, and no difficulty can arise upon it.

"As to the control of Army and Navy, no one suggests any interference with the Imperial authority over the Army and the Navy. I include in that such naval control of harbours as is necessary for security.

"Captain Gwynn has proposed that Ireland should have power to raise a force for home defence. In other words, to pass a Territorial Act for Ireland. My policy about the Volunteers is known: I proposed at the beginning of the war that the Government should utilize the existing Volunteer forces; and had this proposal been acted on in 1914 there would have been no rebellion in 1916. If I understand Captain Gwynn, he did not suggest that Irish Territorials should be under an Irish War Office and an Irish Minister for War, but that in his opinion a system of Irish Territorials was desirable, and inasmuch as the English Territorial Acts are not suitable to us, the Irish Parliament should be given the power to raise under Imperial authority a force for itself and on its own lines.

"If this is his view, I agree with it. But this is a matter on which no one would think of breaking off.

"Speaking generally, I think the Archbishop of Dublin and those who agree with him may take it for granted that upon all those questions which he grouped under the heading of Imperial Security there would be little difficulty in arriving at an agreement with, at any rate, men like myself.

"Now let me deal with the second group of subjects put forward by the Archbishop of Dublin under the heading of Fiscal Security—or a reasonable prospect of national prosperity.



"The first objection is to what is called fiscal autonomy, although, after listening most carefully to his speeches, it seems to me that the real objection is not so much an objection to fiscal autonomy as establishing the full power of the Irish Parliament over the collection and imposition of Irish taxes, as an objection to giving that Parliament power to set up a tariff against Great Britain."

He referred then at length to the Report of the Primrose Committee on Irish Finance, dated October 1911.<sup>1</sup> That Committee had for its chairman a great English Civil Servant; three of its members were famous English financiers; another was the Professor of Political Economy at Oxford. Of the two names associated closely with Ireland, one was Lord Pirrie, whose fortune had been made in Belfast, and the only Irish Nationalist was the Bishop of Ross. They had reported unanimously for giving to Ireland full fiscal powers. "We tried hard," Redmond said, "to get the principle of their Report adopted in framing the Bill of 1912." Government insisted on adhering to the plan of "contract finance" which their own non-partisan committee of experts had explicitly condemned.

He quoted several passages from the weighty argument by which the Committee had justified its conclusions, especially those dealing with the contention that the power would be used to set up a tariff against British goods.

"Ireland is not a nation of fools.

"If in framing a new Constitution you go on the assumption that every power you confer will be abused, it would be far better to desist from your task altogether, and instead of increasing the powers of a people dead to all sense of responsibility and manifestly unfit for political freedom, you had better disestablish all existing

<sup>1</sup> His notes here are only references to quotations. I supplement on this page by my own notes.—S. G.



forms of constitutional government and advocate the government of Ireland as a Crown Colony. But none of us so distrust our people.

“Dr. O'Donnell has proposed a solution of the difficulty about imposing a tariff against England by means of a Conference between the two nations. Other suggestions will be made. Protection may be found for Ulster by giving to them disproportionate representation. It may be found in the power of the Senate, it may be found in the power to suspend. If we are agreed somewhat on the general lines of the Primrose Report, the outstanding difficulty will be capable of adjustment.

“Sir Crawford McCullagh rightly pointed out the terrible burden of war taxation, which is at present over twenty millions, and he said we cannot go on on those lines, and we must get back to pre-war burdens or the country will be ruined. How are we to get back?

“If nothing is done by us, and the war goes on, as it may, for some years, we may easily be paying thirty, forty, or fifty millions, and generations to come will have to bear a crushing load. The income tax is certain to be raised, and excess profits also, and no part of Ireland will suffer more than Ulster, and especially Belfast.

“The highest interest of Ulster, therefore, is a speedy settlement whereby the increase of war taxation will cease and Ireland's contribution to Imperial purposes will either disappear or, to put it at the very lowest, be limited and stereotyped.

“Mr. Knight raised the question of land purchase. I agree with every word he said, but what is the difficulty? The difficulty is in providing the additional money needed at a low rate of interest. As part of a settlement I feel quite sure we could obtain the completion of land purchase on satisfactory terms. Indeed, I have the highest authority for the statement that this question would be regarded as an essential portion of a settlement, and that a most generous arrangement would be made. But

if there is no settlement, do you imagine the Treasury will do anything to help us? No. I fear the British Government will be more occupied in endeavouring to deal with the state of open anarchy in Ireland than in making great financial concessions on land purchase. Mr. Knight, if he wants purchase completed, had better help us to an agreement.

"The third group of objections mentioned by the Archbishop of Dublin deals with Security for Minorities.

"On this, it is impossible for the Convention to break down, because we are all in favour of the object in view. It is a mere question of the best machinery to carry out our unanimous desire and intention.

"Ulster may clearly claim a representation out of proportion to her numbers, not only, I admit, in the Senate, but in the lower chamber. Safeguards of the most stringent character would be accepted, at any rate by me, in the machinery of the Constitution to prevent the possibility of Ulster's interest, Ulster's prosperity and Ulster's sentiments being injured or overridden.

"For Southern Unionists, the case is unanswerable. They *must* get proper representation in both Houses.

"Some suggestions have been made: proportional representation; Mr. Murphy's proposal of a special representation for property; special representation for creeds, and finally a nominated element in the House of Commons. I have an open mind on them all. It may be none of these will be found wholly satisfactory. But where there is a will there is a way. We are all agreed it must be done, and therefore it can and will be done.

"In none of these objections, and they are the chief ones that have emerged on Imperial security, fiscal security, and security of minorities, is there in my mind any difficulty in coming to an agreement, if we are really animated by the desire every speaker has professed to

answer the appeal of the Empire in this hour of her dire extremity by removing one of her greatest weaknesses and dangers.

"We were told by Lord Midleton to play for safety. What is safety for us? What is safety for the Empire? I strongly say the only safety is a settlement of this question.

"What will be the certain effect of a breakdown? No one could fail to have been impressed by the serious and solemn note upon which the Archbishop of Dublin concluded his speech. He reminded you this was not a question of Ulster and the rest of Ireland, not of Catholic and Protestant, or Unionist and Nationalist: it was a question of the necessity for all men of good will, all men of responsibility, all men who know that the foundation of freedom is the maintenance of order, to join hands to protect their common country from anarchy and chaos.

"The Archbishop spoke of Mr. Lysaght's speech as a threat. No one here will be moved by threats, but let us not be mad enough to shut our eyes to the facts. Is there a man in this room who can contemplate without horror the immediate future of Ireland if this Convention fails? For my part, I see clearly a future following on our failure in which on one side there will be an angered, if you like, a maddened people, with no responsible control, and on the other, Government ruling by the point of the bayonet. Between these two forces there will be no place for a Constitutional party or for men like myself.

"That would be the effect in Ireland. What would be the effect throughout the Empire?

"I have close relations with statesmen of all parties in all the Dominions, and I am informed that twenty-five per cent. of their troops are of Irish birth or of Irish parents, and that they have practically joined because they believed the Irish problem was as good as settled.

"What has happened about Ireland has caused untold difficulties in every Dominion. Mr. Holman, the Prime

Minister of New South Wales, said that conscription was defeated by the Irish vote. Mr. Hughes said the same. Two hundred thousand troops have been lost to the Empire by the feeling of disgust at the failure to settle the Irish question. It has been the same in Canada. Everywhere a breakdown will be regarded with dismay.

“What will be the effect in America? The position of America is grave and dangerous. I have close relations with many Americans of high position and influence, and they all tell me the same. This is a secret session, and I can repeat what they say. There is little or no enthusiasm for the war. Mind, I am speaking of Americans, not Irish Americans. The apathy is largely due to distrust of England. They distrust her posing as the champion of small nations while here at her doors the Irish question is unsettled. Lord Midleton says the Americans are uninformed. Perhaps so as to details. Perhaps they only see the broad effect. But how does that help us? The fact remains. Ireland is the only, or the chief, cause of American apathy to-day. This is of vital importance. Could we hope to win the war if America dropped out? Russia has gone. The President of the United States has many pacifist men around him. Their movement is strong. Germany is abstaining from outrages that would raise American feeling. I say, the danger of peace proposals which we could not accept being offered to America and accepted by her is a real and a very serious one.

“Hence it is that the Government, the diplomatic service, and all connected with our foreign affairs are feverishly anxious as to the result of our deliberations. If we break down in despair and helplessness, God only knows how terrible and far-reaching may be the consequence.

“Far better for us and for the Empire never to have met than to have met and failed of an agreement.



“Finally, what would be the effect of a breakdown at the front ?

“We are called upon on all sides of this ancient quarrel to make what people call sacrifices—sacrifices of inherited predilections, of old-world ideas, and of ancient shibboleths, of perhaps ingrained prejudice. I would be ashamed to speak of the surrender of such things as sacrifices, when I remember the kind of sacrifices our brave boys have made and are making this very hour while we are safe at home talking. I cannot trust myself to speak upon this matter. Only the other day, once again the Ulster Division and the Sixteenth Irish Division, shoulder to shoulder, have fought and died for Ireland. The full story is not yet known, but it is full of tragedy, of heroism and of glory. Surely they deserve some encouragement. No set of men living would be prouder and happier than they if we can send them the news of a settlement of this question which will relieve them from the daily shame they feel, every time they meet their Allies, in the consciousness that their country, Ireland, for which they are facing death, is distracted and disunited and a source of reproach.

“No, we must come to a settlement. We must rise to the occasion—if only to save ourselves from a lifelong remorse for wrecking this venture—for what the historian of the future would describe as a crime against the Empire in her hour of deadliest peril, and a crime against the peace and happiness of our own beloved and long-suffering country.”

One result of this speech was seen at once in an utterance from Mr. Andrew Jameson, a leading figure among the Southern Unionists. He said at once that Redmond had convinced him that all the difficulties as to maintaining the Imperial connection and providing safeguards for minorities could and would be met. The fiscal difficulty remained. He pressed the Ulster group to come to our assistance and depart from their attitude



of silence. This speech went further towards our desire than any Unionist had previously gone.

In a later debate Mr. Pollock outlined two essentials of the Ulster demand. The United Kingdom must remain a fiscal unit; and Ireland must be represented at Westminster. If these points were conceded, agreement, he thought, should be possible.

On the whole, as discussion grew franker and more business-like, relations improved. There were small passages at arms, but these only served to show how strong was the general desire for harmony. One of my colleagues said that he did not know what to make of a political assembly where everyone applauded when you got up, and applauded when you sat down, and never interrupted you. Another said that the Convention was the only society in Ireland from which one always came away cheered up: and this was so generally felt that an Ulster speaker reminded us that the atmosphere of our proceedings was pleasant but exceptional. He warned us to remember that, even if we agreed, either side might be repudiated. Yet there was a marked feeling that the Convention, and the tone which prevailed in the Convention, had done good in the country. This was admitted by the Grand Master of the Orange Order, Colonel Wallace, in a speech which led to an important illustration of the mutual process of education, for it raised with great frankness the issue of religious differences and alluded specially to the recent Papal decrees over which so much controversy had raged. The Bishop of Raphoe rose to reply and expounded, as an ex-professor of Canon Law, the true bearing of these documents. His speech was a masterpiece; its candour and its lucidity commended itself to all hearers, but most of all to the Ulstermen, who applauded at once Lord Oranmore's comment that the *odium theologicum* had been replaced by *divina caritas*; and at a very late stage in our proceedings, Mr. Barrie referred back to this speech

of the Bishop's as one of the things which they would never forget.

The Primate, who in this month of September was one of the hopeful hearts ("My confidence has grown daily," he said), used words which met with widespread response: "We can never leave this hall and speak of men whom we have met here as we have spoken of them in the past." There was good will in the air—good will to each other and to the enterprise. At the close of the proceedings in Cork the Lord Mayor of Belfast moved a vote of thanks to the citizens through their Lord Mayor, and he closed on a note of hope—anticipating "something in store for Ireland."

Yet already these anticipations were overcast. During this week, while all seemed going so well, one of the endless unhappy and preventible things happened. It was from Redmond that I first heard the news. One of the Sinn Féin leaders who had been rearrested on suspicion after the amnesty took part in a hunger-strike as a protest against being subjected to the conditions imposed on a convicted felon. He was forcibly fed and died under the process, owing to heart-failure. Redmond told me with fury how he had urged again and again on the Chief Secretary the possibility of some such calamity, and had urged that these men should receive the treatment proper in any case to political prisoners, but above all to men who had been neither convicted nor tried.

The result was immediately seen in some hostile demonstrations in Cork, chiefly against Mr. Devlin and Redmond. But this was only the beginning. On the following Sunday the body of the dead man, Thomas Ashe, was carried through the streets of Dublin at the head of a vast procession, in which large bodies of Volunteers, openly defying Government's proclamation, marched in uniform; and he was buried with military honours and volleys fired over his grave. With all this breach of the law Government dared not interfere. They had put

themselves in the wrong ; whether they prevented the demonstration or permitted it, mischief was bound to follow. A new incitement was given to the enthusiasm for Sinn Féin, a new martyr was provided, and new hostility was raised against the Convention, for whose success Government was notoriously anxious. On the other hand, Ulster Unionist opinion was violently offended ; they were scandalized by the disregard for law and the impotence of constitutional authority. This attitude, however open to comments based on their own recent history, did not render them any easier to deal with. Above all, the Ashe incident emphasized the presence in Ireland of a great force over which Redmond had no control and which had no representative in the Convention. How, men asked, even if a bargain could be made with Constitutional Nationalists, should that covenant be carried into effect ?

### III

The Cork visit marks the close of the first stage in the history of the Convention. At the opening of our session there it was decided to appoint a Grand Committee of twenty, whose task should be, "if possible, to prepare a scheme for submission to the Convention, which would meet the views and difficulties expressed by the different speeches during the course of the debate." The Convention itself, after its deliberations of that week, would adjourn until the Committee was in a position to report. This second stage, purely of committee work, was to last much longer than anyone anticipated : the Convention did not reassemble till the week before Christmas. If that length of adjournment had been foreseen, the Committee would never have been appointed.

Mr. Lysaght in his first address to the Convention had pressed upon us the view that Sinn Féin could be won.

But he warned us also (with such emphasis that some speakers afterwards resented it as a threat) that if the Convention produced no result, or an unacceptable result, or provoked suspicion by delay, the result would be a revolution. Already impatience was growing. We could publish no account of our proceedings: but it became known inevitably that we had not as yet reached one operative conclusion in our task of Constitution building.

At Cork, Sir Horace Plunkett made an encouraging speech at the public luncheon; he announced the appointment of our Committee, which certainly looked like business. But only when we got to detail did men fully realize the difficulties and the embarrassing nature of the position.

The Ashe affair had done more harm than we knew. When the Primate was making the hopeful speech from which a few words have already been quoted, he spoke also of our experience as having been a process of mutual education, which we needed to extend beyond our own assembly. He promised his help in this, and it was felt that Ulstermen generally were on their honour to report well of what they commended in our presence. They were, it seems, at least as good as their word; the Committee behind them was favourably impressed, and when we went to Cork—so I have been informed—the question of giving the delegates full powers to negotiate was under discussion. But this mood was dissipated by the angry temper in all sections which arose out of the imprisonments, the hunger-strikes, the penalties imposed, and the successive concessions to violent resistance.

To this was added a new cause of quarrel. The Franchise Bill was now coming before the House of Commons; and under the provisions agreed to by the Speaker's Conference, extension of the franchise was to be applied in Ireland, but there was to be no redistribution. This proposal was not unreasonable, since the Home Rule Act was now a statute and under it new and properly



distributed constituencies were scheduled; while over and above this the Convention was in existence to occupy itself with the matter.

On the other hand, the existing distribution of seats was hard on Unionist Ulster: the great mass of population in and about Belfast was under-represented. Ulstermen said that while Nationalists professed great desire to give favour to minorities, in reality they persisted in keeping their political opponents at an unfair disadvantage. There was no more question of enlarging the delegates' authority in Convention: the Advisory Committee hardened their attitude, and it was our task to convince a body which could not hear our arguments at first hand. Decisions lay with Ulstermen in Belfast, not in the Convention—that is to say, not subject to the daily, hourly, prompting to remember that they were not only Ulstermen but Irishmen, which arose from friendly intercourse with their fellow-delegates.

The Grand Committee of twenty, representing all groups, met on October 11th. Sir Horace Plunkett had in advance begged Redmond to undertake the presentation of a scheme which would serve as a basis for discussion. Redmond declined, on the ground that the initiative should come from someone who was not there as a politician; but he admitted that the onus of making a proposal was on Home Rulers. Dr. O'Donnell, though an office-bearer in the United Irish League, was present as a representative of the hierarchy; he was charged with the task. He had been throughout a strong advocate of claiming for Ireland all the powers possessed by any of the Dominions, with limitations on the military side; he had also been forward in his desire to give wholly exceptional rights of representation to minorities.

But when we got into Committee one man immediately took the lead. Sir Alexander McDowell<sup>1</sup> had not spoken in any debate; there is reason to believe that he was

<sup>1</sup> He was knighted for his work in connection with the war.



glad not to commit himself in advance before the moment when his special gift might come into play. All his life he had been carrying through agreements between conflicting interests : he was a great mediator and negotiator. Now, he advocated what was, in strictness, an irregularity. A task had been delegated to us : he asked us to delegate it again to a smaller group. The whole case, he said, had been fully opened up ; further debate would be no use ; we all knew all the arguments. He deprecated formal procedure ; it was plainly a family quarrel, and we should treat it in that spirit. Honestly, he said, he should be sorry if the Convention failed. Ulster had no fault to find with the Union ; but they were living next door to a house already in flames.

That was the general tone, but it would be difficult to convey the impression of experience and authority which his manner left : and Redmond supported him. It was plain that the two men would understand each other. In the upshot their view prevailed ; Redmond, Mr. Barrie and Lord Midleton were instructed to suggest names, and after an interval they came back with a list of nine. Lord Midleton was for the Southern Unionists ; Mr. Barrie, Lord Londonderry and Sir Alexander McDowell for the Northern ; Redmond, Mr. Devlin and Bishop O'Donnell represented the parliamentary Nationalists, and to them were added Mr. W. M. Murphy and Mr. George Russell.

This left eleven of us unemployed, and some days later we were formed into three sub-committees, the first dealing with the question of Electoral Reform and the composition of an Irish Parliament ; the second with Land Purchase, and the third with a possible Territorial Force and the Police. But the marrow of the business rested with the original sub-committee of nine.

They, however, could not get rapidly to work ; other affairs pulled them in different directions. Redmond was forced to go to Westminster, where the Franchise

Bill was coming on ; moreover, the Irish party felt that it must raise the question of Irish administration.

As our leader, he was obliged to speak on both matters. His reply to the Ulster amendment proposing to extend redistribution to Ireland was that this departed from the compromise reached at the Speaker's Conference, and moreover ignored the existence of the Convention. He spoke with studied brevity and avoidance of party spirit : but the debate became a wrangle. Mr. Barrie brought back into it some of the Convention's friendlier atmosphere ; but his argument was that in the interests of the Convention this concession should be made.

The second debate, on October 23rd, was inevitably contentious : it deplored the policy being pursued by the Irish Executive and the Irish military authorities "at a time when the highest interests of Ireland and the Empire demand the creation of an atmosphere favourable to the Convention." Redmond had an easy task in convicting the Government's action of incoherence and of blundering provocation—but to do this was of no advantage to his main purpose, which he served as best he could by a side-wind, eulogizing the temper of the Convention and specially the "sincere desire for a reasonable settlement" shown by the Ulster delegates.

Still, at the best, it was impossible for him not to feel that the reaction of a debate which could not be kept in the tone on which he started it must be unfavourable to the meetings of the Nine which were about to take place. He was to go in to negotiate a settlement for his country while the voices of faction were yelping at his heels all over Ireland, and all the forces of reconciliation which he had brought into play were neutralized and sterilized.

A debate of these days gave him a happier occasion to intervene than the domestic bickerings in which he had been forced to take part ; yet even in this the note of sadness predominated. On October 29th, when a

vote of thanks was proposed to the Navy, Army and Mercantile Marine, he joined his voice to that of other leaders of parties, to emphasize, as he said, that they spoke from an absolutely unanimous House of Commons. He recalled the exploits of Irish troops and dwelt again on the presence of a large Irish element in the Canadian and Anzac Divisions. But his reference was chiefly to those Nationalist Irish Brigades, who had remained true, he said, to the old motto of the Brigade of Fontenoy, *Semper et ubique fidelis*. These men had known in the midst of their privations and sufferings a new and poignant feeling of anguish: they had seen "a section at any rate of their countrymen" repudiate the view that in serving as they served they were fighting for Ireland, for her happiness, for her prosperity and her liberty.

"I wish it were possible for me to speak a word to every one of those men. If my words could reach them, I would say to every one of them that they need have no misgiving, that they were right from the first, that time will vindicate them, that time will show that while fighting for liberty and civilization in Europe they are also fighting for civilization and liberty in their own land. I would like to say to every one of them, in addition, that even at this moment, when ephemeral causes have confused and disturbed Irish opinion, they are regarded with feelings of the deepest pride and gratitude by the great bulk of the Irish race and by all that is best in every creed and class in Ireland."

The Irish Divisions had once and again been engaged shoulder to shoulder, but this time with very different fortune, in the third battle of Ypres; yet, win or lose, they won or lost together. In that same fighting Redmond's own son had earned special honour; the Distinguished Service Order was bestowed on him for holding up a broken line with his company of the Irish Guards. At a happier time this news would have been received with enthusiasm all over Ireland; now,

the most one could say was that it delighted the Convention.

It would be quite wrong, however, to regard Redmond's attitude in these days as unhopeful. The first meetings of the Nine were fruitful of much agreement—conditional at all points on general ratification. But the true spirit of compromise was there. So far as concerned the provision to give minorities more than their numerical weight, it was agreed that there should be two Houses, with powers of joint session, and with control over money bills conceded to the Upper House. In the Lower House Unionists should (somehow) get forty per cent. of the representation: so that in the joint session the influences would be equally balanced.

The hitch came over finance. Nationalists wanted complete powers of taxation, but would agree to a treaty establishing Free Trade between the two countries for a long period. Ulster wanted a common fiscal control for Great Britain and Ireland. By November 1st a complete deadlock had been reached.

On that date the Grand Committee met to take stock informally of the position, especially in regard to the procedure of the more detailed sub-committees, and to face the fact that a grave misfortune had befallen us. Sir Alexander McDowell had been prevented by illness from attending any of the meetings. He had no further part in the Convention's work, and died before it ended.

Redmond in a confidential talk spoke of his absence as lamentable. The two had arranged—on the Belfast man's proposal—to meet for private interviews before the Nine came together. Neither had control of the forces for which he spoke; but both stood out, by everyone's consent, from the rest of the assembly. It is impossible to say how much they might have achieved had they come to an understanding; but assuredly no other representative of the North spoke with the same self-confidence or the same weight of personality as Sir



Alexander McDowell. My own feeling about him—if it be worth while to record a personal impression—was that he was a man with the instinct for carrying big things through—that the problem tempted him, as a task which called for the exertion of powers which he was conscious of possessing. In losing him we lost certainly the strongest will in his group, perhaps the strongest in the Convention; and it was a will for settlement. It was, too, a will less hampered by regard for public opinion than that of any popularly elected representative man can be. He had, I think, also eminently the persuasive gift which is not only inclined to give and take but can impart that disposition to others.

Mr. Pollock, who replaced him, was an able man, but singularly lacking in this quality. He held his own views clearly and strongly, but his method of exposition accentuated differences: it had always a note of asperity, though this was certainly not deliberate. One of the pleasant memories which remains with me is of a day when debate grew acrimonious and hot words were used. Mr. Pollock refused to reply to some phrases which might have been regarded as taunts, because, he said, "I have made friendships here which I never expected to make, and I value them too much to risk the loss of them." That friendly temper, combined with his ability, made him a valuable member of this Convention: but for the critical work of bringing men's minds together, of sifting the essential from the unessential, he was a bad exchange for Sir Alexander McDowell.

Redmond said to me that he had found Mr. Barrie much more conciliatory than in the earlier and public stages. He was delighted with Lord Midleton, who was, he said, "showing an Irish spirit which I never expected";—standing up for the claims of an Irish Parliament if there was to be one. In the discussion, however, one man, Bishop O'Donnell, had been "head and shoulders above everyone else."

Argument had ranged about the question of customs and excise. This was the dividing line. But when at last a deadlock was definitely reached, the Ulster position was stated in a letter which refused to concede to an Irish Parliament the control of either direct or indirect taxation. It was to be a Parliament with no taxing power at all.

On the other hand, in the corresponding document from the Nationalist side, the importance of immediate and full fiscal control had been put very high.

"Self-government does not exist," it said, "where those nominally entrusted with affairs of government have not control of fiscal and economic policy. No nation with self-respect could accept the idea that while its citizens were regarded as capable of creating wealth they were regarded as incompetent to regulate the manner in which taxation of that wealth should be arranged, and that another country should have the power of levying and collecting taxes, the taxed country being placed in the position of a person of infirm mind whose affairs are regulated by trustees. No finality could be looked for in such an arrangement, not even a temporary satisfaction."

The genesis of this passage should be told, for it had importance in the history of the Convention; and also it conveys an idea of the limits to which Redmond carried self-effacement. It is important because it acted on Ulster like a red rag shown to a bull. Obviously, if this were the Nationalist view, then the Home Rule Act could not be said to give self-government—for under its system of contract finance Ireland certainly had not control of her fiscal and economic policy. A measure accepted with enthusiasm in 1912 was now regarded as impossible of giving "even a temporary satisfaction."

What had happened was this. The Chairman in his tireless efforts to bring about agreement had addressed two sets of questions, to the Nationalists and to the

Ulstermen respectively, by answering which he hoped they might clear the air. The direct answers for the Nationalists were drafted by Mr. Russell, but were shown to Redmond, Mr. Devlin and the Bishop of Raphoe. It was, however, suggested that as an addendum a summary should be added. Redmond did not ask to see this addition, and it was not shown to him. It led off with the paragraph which has been quoted. The fact that he allowed anything in any stage of such a negotiation to go out in his name without his own revision marks the loosening of grip—a tired man.

His exertions for the past years, the past ten years at least, had been tremendous: they had been redoubled from 1912 to 1916. Towards the end, one resource had been failing him—the chief of all. A leader when he is well followed gives and takes; there is interchange of energy. For more than a year now Redmond had lacked the moral support, the almost physical stimulus, which comes from the ready response of followers. Labour at no time came easy to him, there was much inertia in his temperament; and the part which he had laid out for himself in the Convention as merely an individual member did not impose on him the same unremitting vigilance as if he acted as leader. Yet, the leadership was his; if he did not exercise it, no one else could; and this incident shows that his abnegation of leadership was not a mere phrase.

On November 22nd the Grand Committee reassembled to hear the report from the Nine. Lord Southborough, who had presided at all their meetings, detailed the conclusions which had been reached or the point on which they had broken down.

Then followed a discussion lasting some three days, in which Ulstermen and Nationalists reaffirmed their positions. Archbishop Bernard, the Primate, and Lord MacDonnell all attempted mediation. Finally, Lord Midleton, who described the position as “a stone wall

on each side," announced that he and his group would put before the Grand Committee certain proposals as a *via media*. These in effect conceded to an Irish Parliament all that Nationalists claimed, subject only to the reservation that customs must be fixed by the Imperial Parliament and the produce of them retained as Ireland's contribution to Imperial services.

At this point our work was interrupted by the re-emergence of the redistribution question. Redmond and the other Irish members were obliged to go to London and assist for two days at a debate in the worst traditions of the House of Commons. The change of atmosphere was extraordinary—and the accusations of bad faith were not limited to what passed at Westminster. One virulent speech declared that the Convention had no prospects, never had any, and was never intended to have any. This was accompanied by an attack on the action of the Ulster group—based, of course, on hearsay. Those of us who felt that at any rate the Convention offered a better hope for Ireland than any which now could be based on action at Westminster pleaded for the acceptance of a proposal which Redmond put forward as a compromise—that the proposed Irish clauses should be dropped from the main Bill and the Irish matter dealt with in a separate statute. It was so agreed at last, and a conference between Irish members, with the Speaker presiding, was set up, and quickly did its work. But if all this had been agreed to in October or earlier, much friction would have been saved and a cause of quarrel with the Ulster that was not in the Convention might have been avoided. Still, peace was achieved, and the proposal to cut down Irish representation was once more defeated.

Grand Committee met for another session, but was chiefly concerned with getting ready for the reassembling of Convention—fixed for Tuesday, December 18th. It was decided that a group meeting of Nationalists for



informal discussion should be held on the Monday night—the first occasion on which this had been done.

Ill-luck, however, seemed to dog us. Dr. Kelly, the Bishop of Ross, who was much closer in his point of view to Redmond than any of the other Bishops, was gravely ill. This was foreseen. But on the Monday a heavy snowstorm fell; Redmond, shut up in his hills at Aughavanagh, could not reach Dublin. The roads were not open till the Thursday, and then he thought it too late to come. He was in truth already too ill to face any unusual exertion.

The Convention had been summoned, not to receive a final report from the Grand Committee, but to face a new situation. An offer had been put forward by one group which altered the whole complexion of the controversy. Grand Committee had abstained from deciding whether to counsel acceptance or rejection. But for the first time an influential body of Irish Unionists had agreed, not as individuals but as representatives, to accept Home Rule, in a wider measure than had been proffered by the Bills of 1886 and 1893 or by the Act of 1914. Limitations which were imposed in all these had been struck out by Lord Midleton's proposals.

On the other hand, it was certain that the Ulster group would reject the scheme. Conversation among Nationalists made it plain that if Ulster would agree with Lord Midleton we should all join them. For the sake of an agreement reached between all sections of Irishmen, but for nothing less conclusive, Dr. O'Donnell and Mr. Russell were content to waive the claim to full fiscal independence. Such an agreement, they held, would be accepted by Parliament in its integrity. But if Ulster stood out, there would be no "substantial agreement," and the terms which Nationalists and Southern Unionists might combine to propose would be treated as a bargaining offer, certain to be chipped down by Government towards conformity with the Ulster demand. In the result there would be an uprising of opinion in Ireland against a

measure so framed ; the fiasco of July, 1916, would repeat itself.

Against this, and prompting us to acceptance, was the view very strongly held by Redmond, that Government urgently needed a settlement for the sake of the war, and would use to the utmost any leverage which helped them to this end. An agreement with Lord Midleton would mean a Home Rule proposal proceeding from a leading Unionist statesman who spoke for the interest in Ireland, which, if any, had reason to fear Nationalist government. This would mean necessarily a profound change in the attitude of the House of Lords and of all those social influences whose power we had felt so painfully. Government could undoubtedly, if it chose, carry a measure giving effect to this compact.

Further, weighing greatly with the instincts of the rank and file was the motive which prompted Irish Nationalists to welcome the advance made by those whom Lord Midleton represented. The Southern Unionists were the old landowning and professional class, friendly in all ways of intercourse, but politically severed and sundered from the mass of the population. Now, they came forward with an offer to help in attaining our desire—quite frankly, against their own declared conviction that the Union was the best plan, but with an equally frank recognition that the majority was the majority and was honest in its intent. The personality of the men reinforced the effect of this : Lord Oranmore, for instance, whom most of them had only known by anti-Home Rule speeches in the House of Lords, revealed himself as the friendliest of Irishmen, with the Irish love for a witty phrase.

This temperamental attitude was of help to Lord Midleton when on December 18th he expounded the position of himself and his friends in a very powerful argument, the more persuasive because the good will in his audience softened his habitual touch of conten-

tiousness. It had seemed to them, he said, that both in the Nationalist and Northern Unionist camp there was a tendency to consider dispositions out of doors and to conciliate certain antagonisms without considering whether they excited others. He and his friends had determined to fix their minds solely on the Convention itself, and to pursue the purpose for which they were summoned of endeavouring after agreement within that body. They were Unionists; but they had asked themselves what could be removed from the present system without disturbing the essence of Union; and in that effort they would go to the extremest limit in their power, without thought of conciliating opinions outside, and without any attempt to bargain.

On one point only he indicated that their scheme was tentative. Defence was by consent of all left to the Imperial Parliament. This implied, he held, an adequate contribution, and the yield of customs to be collected by the Imperial Parliament seemed roughly to meet the case, for the period of the war. But this was not absolutely a hard-and-fast proposal. In any case, after the war, the amount should be the subject of inquiry by a joint commission.

Apart from this, the offer was their last word. It conceded to Ireland the control of all purely Irish services. This included the fixation of excise, because excise on commodities produced in Ireland did not touch the treaty-making power. Customs touched that power, and therefore customs, like defence, must be left to the Imperial Parliament. But, he argued, Irish Nationalists were not asked to give up anything which had been conceded to them by any previous Home Rule proposal.

To all Unionists he said: These proposals keep the power of the Crown over all Imperial services undiminished; they keep representation at Westminster—a corollary from leaving the Imperial Parliament powers over Irish taxation; and by accepting the suggestions already

agreed to, they give a generous representation to Unionists in an Irish Parliament. This special representation of minorities was, he thought, sufficient to give a guarantee of "sane legislation" while it lasted; and he suggested that the period should be fifteen years. These concessions, in his opinion, sufficiently protected Southern Unionists. To Ulster he said, "We share every danger threatening you—we have many dangers you need not fear. Yet, we have no sinister anticipations. Are you still determined to stand out?"

On the other hand, when so much of the full demand was conceded, were Nationalists insistent, he asked, on demanding what they had never asked in the discussions upon any Home Rule Bill? Nationalist leaders had now the chance of leading a combination of all sane elements in the landowning and land-cultivating classes. No Irish leader had ever before been able to present such an appeal to Unionist opinion as would come from the man who represented a Convention Party.

It was a speech which Redmond, if present, must have replied to, and could not have replied to without indicating profound sympathy—for he was in agreement with its main lines; and his expression of opinion upon it must have influenced strongly the views of the rank and file at the moment when they were most open to suggestion.

In his absence, men's minds were greatly affected by the fear that if we adopted these proposals, our decision would be exposed to attack from a combination of three forces—Sinn Féin, which would at least officially condemn anything less than complete separation, and would furiously assail a proposal that denied full taxing powers; the Roman Catholic Church, which would take its lead from Bishop O'Donnell, who set out in an able memorandum the reasons why Ireland must have full control of taxation; and finally, the powerful newspaper whose proprietor, Mr. Murphy, at once gave signs of his hostility



by putting on the paper an amendment to Lord Midleton's resolution which amounted to a direct negative.

The reassembly of the Convention was fixed for Wednesday, January 2nd. Redmond came to Dublin on the Monday. He told me that he was inclined to move that while we thanked Lord Midleton for his substantial contribution towards our purpose, we could not accept his proposal, unless it opened the way to a settlement. What he meant by this was not merely that if Ulster agreed, we should accept; for that would certainly open the way. But he had also in his mind the possibility of a guarantee from Government that an arrangement come to, as this might be, by four-fifths of the Convention, and repudiated only by the pledge-bound Ulster block, would be regarded as substantial agreement, and taken as a basis for legislation. In that case, also, the way would be open; but he had no written assurance of such an understanding, though I gathered that he was urging the Government to give it. We were, however, told on good authority in these days that if the Southern Unionists' proposal was accepted by the Nationalists and other elements outside of Ulster, the Prime Minister would use his whole influence with his colleagues to secure acceptance of the compact and immediate legislation upon it. This would mean, we were also assured, that the whole thing would be done before Easter.

On January 2nd the resumed debate for the first time brought the Convention face to face with concrete proposals for a settlement. In tone and in substance it would have done credit to any Parliament that ever sat. I shall not try to summarize the arguments, but simply to note certain outstanding facts.

Lord Midleton modified his original proposal that collection of customs should be an Imperial service throughout. He agreed that collection might be done by the Irish Civil Service. Moreover, he admitted that Ireland

must have full means of checking the account for these taxes, great part of which must necessarily be collected at English ports, since tea, tobacco and the other dutiable articles were seldom shipped direct to Ireland.

But he made it plain that the essential of his proposal was the maintenance of a common customs system, leaving the fixation of customs to the Imperial Parliament for Great Britain and Ireland. If this was denied, as it would be by the acceptance of Mr. Murphy's amendment, all Unionists would be driven once more into the same lobby; all chance of uniting elements heretofore divided would disappear.

This was the fact against which we were brought up. Insistence on the full Nationalist demand as it had been outlined in the Convention meant the refusal of a new and powerful alliance which now offered itself, and the destruction of anything which could be called an agreement.

In the close, Lord Midleton reinforced his appeal by a solid material argument. The sub-committee presided over by Lord MacDonnell had reached unanimous conclusions embodying proposals for the completion of land purchase within a very brief period. Landlords, agents, tenants, representatives for Ulster as well as from the South and West, were parties to this plan. Lord Midleton now looked back on the past as one who had been in the fight since Mr. Gladstone's first Home Rule Bill. Every fresh settlement had been wrecked, he said, by standing for the last shred of the demand. In 1885, if Gladstone had abandoned the identity of democratic franchise for both countries and had made to the Irish minority such concessions as this Convention was willing to make, he would have carried the Liberal Unionist element with him. Then, as now, a great land purchase scheme depended on the solution of the main problem. To-day land purchase stood or fell with the Convention.

He was backed by Lord Dunraven—who waived his

preference for his own original proposal—and by Lord Desart, in most able argument: the latter declaring that the proposal to give Ireland a separate customs system could never be carried in England. But the speech of the day came from Mr. Kavanagh, who, speaking as a Nationalist who had been a Unionist, ended a most moving appeal for agreement with a declaration that he at all events would vote for the compromise. There was no mistaking the effect produced by the earnestness of this speaker, who knew as much of Ireland and was as well fitted to judge of its true interests as any man in the room. That effect was felt, I think, in the tone of a private meeting of Nationalists held the same night. Redmond, with the art of which he was a master, indicated support for the proposal without forcing a conclusion. He dwelt on the fact that if we did not agree we not only lost our chance of immediate and complete land purchase but left ourselves subjected to the entire burden of war taxation. Other speakers pointed out that we ought not to let ourselves be lured into driving the Southern Unionists and the Ulstermen together against us. Mr. Clancy said in his downright manner that he would not as yet express his view publicly: but that he was not going to reject this offer for the sake of fixing taxes on tea and tobacco, and that when the right time came, he would say so. The strongest arguments used against this view were that in surrendering control of customs we lost our management of the taxes which pressed upon the poor; and further, that even if we agreed, no one knew what would result. We had no guarantee that the compact would be expressed in legislation. But on the whole the tone showed a disposition to accept, and especially to support Redmond—who had spoken of his political career as a thing ended.

Next day the debate in Convention continued. Archbishop Bernard, speaking as a Unionist, said that the proposal was a venture beset with risks, but the greatest

danger of all was to do nothing. It would be a grave responsibility for Ulster to wreck the chance of a settlement. Lord Oranmore dwelt on the composition of the proposed Legislature Power was to be entrusted to a very different Parliament from that which they had feared. He and his like were to get what they desired—an opportunity of taking part in the government of the country. It looked to him as if the only possible Irish Government under this scheme must be Unionist in its complexion.

Perhaps there was an echo of this in Redmond's speech, by far the greatest he made in the Convention, when at last he intervened on January 4th—the Friday which ended that session.

He dealt at once with Mr. Barrie's often repeated view that the proper object of our endeavours was to find a compromise between the Act of 1914 and the proposal for partition put forward by Ulster. On that basis the Convention could never have been brought together. The Prime Minister's letter of May 16th which proposed the Convention suggested that Irishmen should meet "for the purpose of drafting a Constitution for their own country." On May 22nd Mr. Lloyd George had said, "We propose that Ireland should try her own hand at hammering out an instrument of government for her people." The only limitation was that it should be a Constitution "for the future government of Ireland within the Empire."

Then he turned to the argument that all the sacrifices were asked from Unionists. Let us weigh them, he said. What sacrifices had been made by the Irish Nationalists, since this chain of events began?—Then followed a passage which I recapitulate, not necessarily in full, but in phrases which he actually used, and I noted down:

"Personal loss I set aside. My position—our position—before the war was that we possessed the confidence of nearly the entire country. I took a risk—we took



it—with eyes open. I have—we have—not merely taken the risk but made the sacrifice. If the choice were to be made to-morrow, I would do it all over again.

“I have had my surfeit of public life. My modest ambition would be to serve in some quite humble capacity under the first Unionist Prime Minister of Ireland.”

As to other sacrifices, in the way of concessions, he recited the list of what had been agreed to—proposals so strangely undemocratic—the nomination of members of Parliament, the disproportionate powers given to a minority. “Shall we not be denounced for making them?” he asked.

On the other hand, what sacrifices had been made by the Southern Unionists? These were the men who had had the hardest battle to fight in the struggle over Home Rule. They were not, like Ulster Unionists, “entrenched in a ring-fence,” but the scattered few, who had suffered most and who might naturally have entertained most bitterness. Yet Lord Midleton’s speech had been instinct with an admirable spirit. The speech of the Archbishop of Dublin had touched him deeply.

“Between these men and us there never again can be the differences of the past. They have put behind them all bitter memories. They have agreed to the framework of a Bill better than any offered to us in 1886, 1893 or 1914.”

As for us Nationalists—he emphasized that each man came here free, untrammelled.

“I speak only for myself. But even if I stand alone, I will not allow myself, because I cannot get the full measure of my demand, to be drawn to reject the proffered hand of friendship held out to us. In my opinion we should be political fools if we did not endeavour to cement an alliance with these men.”

As concerned the Labour men, Mr. Whitley, who had always been a Unionist, had declared willingness to agree. But the Ulster Unionists—what sacrifice had they made?

“The last thing I desire is to attack Mr. Barrie and his friends. But they are not free agents. I was shocked when I heard that a section here openly avowed the need to refer back to some outside body. If we had been told we were going into a body which would consist of two orders of members, it would have been difficult to get us here.”

On the essential point Ulster had made no concession. What did Mr. Barrie say in his formal document? ‘We are satisfied that for Ireland and for Great Britain a common system of finances with one Exchequer is a fundamental necessity.’ If they denied the taxing power to Ireland, any proposal on these lines must give Ireland less than any proposal for Home Rule ever put forward. This was Ulster’s original position and they had not budged an inch.

“This is their response to the Empire’s S.O.S. Is it worthy of Ulster’s Imperial loyalty? I don’t believe it is their last word.”

Lord Londonderry, however, in replying, did not add any ground of hope. The last speech of the day announced that of six trade unionists five would support the compromise.

Redmond that evening put on the notice paper a motion adopting Lord Midleton’s proposals provided that they “be adopted by His Majesty’s Government as a settlement of the Irish question and legislative effect be given to them forthwith.”

On the day before this motion was tabled, a party was given at Lord Granard’s house which everybody attended, and which marked the most festive moment of our comradeship. When we separated on the Friday most men were absolutely confident of an agreement covering four-fifths of the Convention.

Unhappily, the motion could not come under consideration for a period of ten days. In the following week Lord Midleton thought it necessary to attend the

House of Lords. It was settled that we should spend the interval discussing the land purchase report, for which his presence was not essential. Redmond, whose health was still bad, did not come up to Dublin. All this gave time for agitation, and agitation was at work.

Still, during that week there was no sign of any change in tone. Members of the local bodies who had gone to their homes at the week's end came back just as much inclined to settle as before.

I met Redmond on the night of Monday, January 14th. He had seen no one in these ten days. He told me that he was still uncertain what would happen, but asked me to get one of the leading County Councillors to second his motion. Next morning I came in half an hour before the meeting to find the man I wanted. When I met him he was full of excitement, and said, "Something has gone wrong; the men are all saying they must vote against Redmond." Then it was evident that propaganda had been busy to some purpose.

When Redmond came in to his place, I said, "It's all right. Martin McDonogh will second your motion." He answered with a characteristic brusqueness, "He needn't trouble. I'm not going to move it; Devlin and the Bishops are voting against me."

He rose immediately the Chairman was in his place.

"The amendment which I have on the paper," he said, "embodies the deliberate advice I give to the Convention.

"I consulted no one—and could not do so, being ill. It stands on record on my sole responsibility.

"Since entering the building I have heard that some very important Nationalist representatives are against this course—the Catholic bishops, Mr. Devlin—and others. I must face the situation—at which I am surprised; and I regret it.

"If I proceeded I should probably carry my point on a division, but the Nationalists would be divided.

Such a division could not carry out the objects I have in view.

"Therefore, I must avoid pressing my motion. But I leave it standing on the paper. The others will give their advice. I feel that I can be of no further service to the Convention and will therefore not move."<sup>1</sup>

There was a pause of consternation. The Chairman intervened and the debate proceeded, and was carried on through the week. During its course a letter to the Chairman from the Bishop of Ross was circulated to us, most dexterous in exposition, most affecting in the tone of its conclusion. It can be read in the Report of the Convention and it cannot with justice be quoted except at full length—so admirable is the linking of argument. It need only be said here that it was an appeal "to my fellow-Nationalists who have already made great concessions" to yield, for the sake of a settlement, this further point, and that the appeal was signed "from my sick-bed, not far removed from my death-bed." That eloquent voice and subtle brain could ill be spared from our assembly: but the letter came too late. It is plain that the writer had no inkling of what would happen till it was actually taking place.

No one can overstate the effect of this episode. Redmond's personal ascendancy in the Convention had become very great. I am certain there was not a man there but would have said, "If there is to be an Irish Parliament, Redmond must be Prime Minister, and his personality will give that Parliament its best possible chance." The Ulstermen had more than once expressed their view that if Home Rule were sure to mean Redmond's rule, their objections to it would be materially lessened. Now, they saw Redmond thrown over, and by a combination in which the clerical influence, so much distrusted by them, was paramount.

<sup>1</sup> These are my notes, jotted as he spoke.—S. G.



## IV

A new stage in the history of the Convention now opens. In the interval between the meeting which began by Redmond's withdrawal of his amendment and that of the following week, Sir Horace Plunkett went to London and laid the situation before the Prime Minister. Redmond had also written to Mr. Lloyd George stating that no progress could be made unless Government would declare its intentions as to legislation. The Chairman came back with the following letter in his pocket :

10 DOWNING STREET,  
WHITEHALL, S.W. 1,  
*January 21, 1918.*

DEAR SIR HORACE PLUNKETT,

In our conversation on Saturday you told me that the situation in the Convention has now reached a very critical stage. The issues are so grave that I feel the Convention should not come to a definite break without the Government having an opportunity of full consultation with the leaders of the different sections. If, and when, therefore, a point is reached at which the Convention finds that it can make no further progress towards an agreed settlement, I would ask that representatives should be sent to confer with the Cabinet. The Government are agreed and determined that a solution must be found. But they are firmly convinced that the best hope of a settlement lies within the Convention, and they are prepared to do anything in their power to assist the Convention finally to reach a basis of agreement which would enable a new Irish Constitution to come into operation with the consent of all parties.

Yours sincerely,  
D. LLOYD GEORGE.

Before acting on this, Sir Horace Plunkett allowed the debate to continue during two days. Since no movement towards agreement manifested itself, but only evidence of widespread and various divergence, he laid

the Prime Minister's invitation before the Convention. There was considerable difference of opinion before a decision was reached for acceptance. Groups separated to select their representatives on the delegation.

It was agreed in private conference that only one view should be presented from the Nationalist side, and that the view of what was at this point clearly the majority. Redmond, in agreeing to act as a delegate, agreed to set aside his own judgment and to press the claim for full fiscal responsibility—which, like other Nationalists, he regarded as in the abstract Ireland's right. But illness prevented him from attending when at last the delegates were received by the Prime Minister on February 13th.

On the 5th he had asked a question in Parliament—the last he was to ask there. It concerned the starting of a factory for the manufacture of aircraft in Dublin—one of the things for which he was pressing in his ceaseless effort to bring Ireland some industrial advantage from the war. I saw him towards the end of that month in his room at the House, and he commented bitterly upon a raid carried out by Sinn Féiners, in which some newly erected buildings were destroyed at one of the aerodromes near Dublin which he had helped to establish. But the main thing he had to say concerned the course of the Convention. Everything, in his judgment, was wrecked; he saw nothing ahead for his country but ruin and chaos.

He spoke of his health. A bout of sickness which had prostrated him at Christmas in Dublin had left him uneasy. He was at the time, I thought, unduly alarmed about himself, and I believed that the continuance of this frame of mind was simply characteristic of a man who had very little experience of ill-health. I left him with profound compassion for his trouble of spirit, but without any serious apprehension for his state of body.

The Convention reassembled on February 26th to consider the result of the delegation, which was summed

up in a letter from Mr. Lloyd George. This well-known document begins with a definite pledge of action. On receiving the report of the Convention the Government would give it immediate attention and would "proceed with the least possible delay to submit legislative proposals to Parliament."—The date of this pledge was February 25, 1918.—Mr. Lloyd George pressed, however, for a settlement "in and through the Convention"; and he declared his conviction that "In view of previous attempts at settlement and of the deliberations of the Convention itself, the only hope of agreement lies in a solution which on the one side provides for the unity of Ireland by a single Legislature, with adequate safeguards for the interests of Ulster and of the Southern Unionists, and, on the other, secures the well-being of the Empire and the fundamental unity of the United Kingdom."

Ireland's strong claim to some control of indirect taxation was admitted; but it was laid down that till two years after the war the fixation and collection of customs and excise should be left to the Imperial Parliament: and that at the end of the war a Royal Commission should report on Ireland's contribution to Imperial expenditure and should submit proposals as to the fiscal relations of the two countries.

For the war period, Ireland was to contribute "an agreed proportion of the Imperial expenditure," but was to receive the full proceeds of Irish revenue from customs and excise, less the agreed contribution. The police and postal services were to be reserved also as war services.

These provisions were laid down as essentials. A suggestion was made of an Ulster Committee within the Irish Parliament, having power to modify or veto measures, whether of legislation or administration, in their application to Ulster.

Lastly, Government expressed their willingness to accept

and finance the Convention's scheme for land purchase and to give a large grant for urban housing.

The question now before the Convention was whether it should or should not accept this offer, which differed from the Midleton proposals in that it withheld the control of excise as well as of customs, and that it retained control of police and Post Office for the war period. It also adumbrated an Ulster Committee, which had been an unpopular suggestion when put forward in the presentation stages. On the other hand, it offered great material inducements in the proposed expenditure for land purchase and for housing. Some of the County Councillors who had been most vehement in their opposition to the Midleton compromise were now disposed to think this too good an offer to let go, but believed it could be obtained without their taking the responsibility of voting for it. It was necessary to point out that the Irish party could not lower a standard of national demand set up by the Nationalists in the Convention, and that if they did so they would be hooted out of existence.

The main argument of those who advised against acceptance was that Ministers had pledged themselves to act in any case. Let them. We could best help by enunciating our own programme. Then they would know the real facts of the Irish situation. If a majority of the Convention accepted the proposals of the Prime Minister's letter, there was no pledge that the Bill would be on those lines. We needed to keep a bargaining margin in what we put forward. It was even suggested that the Government proposals would be more likely to attract support in Ireland if put forward as a generous offer from a largely Unionist Government than if published as a compromise to which Nationalists had condescended.

Our reply was that the essential thing was to make a beginning with self-government, and that by refusing



to accept the Government's offer, on which alone we could combine with an influential Unionist section, we gravely increased the difficulties in the way of carrying Home Rule. If, as we held, the main need was to unite Ireland, the last thing on which we should insist was the concession of complete financial powers. When the lack of those powers began to prove itself injurious to Ireland's material interests, Ireland would certainly become united in a demand for the concession of them; and the history of the British Empire since the loss of America showed that every such demand had been granted to a self-governing State.

At this moment interest centred on the discussion in private councils of Nationalists. The debates in full Convention were animated, but somewhat unreal by comparison. Lord Midleton's motion had been dropped, by consent, for a series of resolutions tabled by Lord MacDonnell which were in substance an acceptance of Government's proposal.

But neither in the private councils nor in the public debates had we Redmond's presence. His illness had grown serious; an operation was necessary; it passed over hopefully, and on Tuesday, March 5th, when the debate resumed, Mr. Clancy had a telegram saying that he was practically out of danger.

It was plain in these days that we were nearing a most critical decision, and Nationalist opinion was profoundly uneasy. Many men were drifting back to Redmond's view, and recoiled from the prospect of dividing the Convention once more into its original component parts—Nationalists on the one side, Unionists on the other. It was proposed that on the Wednesday Nationalists should meet and, if possible, concert joint action; if not, determine definitely each to go our own ways; for a painful part of the situation was that all of us had been used to act together, and none now felt himself free of some obligation. This had to be cleared up

When we came down to Trinity College that morning, the news met us that Redmond was dead.

The Convention adjourned its work, although time pressed most seriously, till after the interment. Ireland is a country where a public man can always count on a good funeral. The body was brought to Kingstown, and thence by special train to Wexford, where he had expressed the wish to be laid, in the burying-place of his own people and in the town with which he had been most closely associated. Hundreds of men came from distant parts to mark their sorrow and respect: what remained of him was carried in long and imposing procession through the streets. Over the grave Mr. Dillon, who had been chosen to succeed him in the chair of the Irish party, spoke eloquent and fitting words. Some day, no doubt, a monument to his memory will be set up in the streets of Wexford, where his great uncle's statue stands, and where will be placed the memorial to his gallant brother, subscribed for from all parts of the kingdom and from all Irish regiments in the Army.

But I say without hesitation that the first and most striking endeavour to put in lasting shape a tribute to John Redmond was made in the Convention, not by great men, but by the ordinary rank and file of Irish Nationalists, who went back from the graveside to the work which his death had interrupted.

Those who had been inclined before to accept his advice—still standing on our minutes—were now more than ever determined to follow it. That advice was not to refuse the hand of friendship which offered itself from men who by alliance with us could take away from the Home Rule demand all sectarian character: who could bring for the first time a great and representative body of Irish landlord opinion and Irish Protestant opinion into line with the opinion of Irish tenants and Irish Catholics. In order to act upon this advice men needed to face a powerful combination of forces and

much threatened unpopularity: they had to encounter the hostility of an able and vindictively conducted newspaper; they had to separate themselves politically from the united voice of their own hierarchy; they had to break away from the politician who for many years now had equalled Redmond in his influence in Ireland and surpassed him in popularity. All of them were representative of constituents, all were living among those whom they represented; not a man of them but knew he would worsen his personal and political position by what he did. Yet, for that is the true way to state it, they stood to their dead leader's policy.

It needs not to follow out in any detail the steps by which we reached the end of our labours. In the upshot, the Ulster group of nineteen dissented from everything and joined in a report which renewed the demand for partition. The Primate and the Provost signed a separate note declaring that a Federal Scheme based on the Swiss or Canadian system offered the only solution which could avoid the alternative choice between the coercion of Ulster and the partition of Ireland. The remaining members, sixty-six in all, accepted one common scheme.<sup>1</sup> Their number included ten Southern Unionists, five Labour representatives (three of whom were Protestant artisans from Belfast), with Lords Granard, MacDonnell and Dunraven, Sir Bertram Windle and the representatives of the Dublin and Cork Chambers of Commerce.

The scheme on which we concurred recommended the immediate establishment of self-government by an Irish Ministry responsible to a Parliament consisting of two Houses, composed on highly artificial lines. For a period of fifteen years Southern Unionists were to be represented by nominated members, while Ulster was to have extra members elected by special constituencies representing commercial and agricultural interests. The

Subject to the publication of a Report signed by Bishop O'Donnell, and these in agreement with him reaffirmed their view.

Parliament was to have full control of internal legislation, administration and direct taxation. The fixation of customs and excise was to be from Westminster, but the proceeds of these taxes to be paid into the Irish Exchequer. There was to be a contribution to the cost of Imperial defences, and representation at Westminster, but a representation of the Irish Parliament rather than of the constituencies. All of this was agreed to at our last meeting, and nothing could have been more pleasant than the atmosphere of good will which prevailed. But this was after a critical division—the most critical in which I have ever voted—in which those of us Nationalists who were for accepting the Government proposals voted with the Southern Unionists and those who were against with the Ulster group. The combination of Ulstermen and extreme Nationalists was thirty-four strong; those who adopted Redmond's policy and Lord Midleton's were thirty-eight. We had in our lobby sixteen of the Nationalist County and Urban Councillors; they had eleven.

If that vote had gone otherwise, we were told plainly that the Southern Unionists would be no parties to the rest of the compromise. They were willing to recommend self-government only if the Convention recommended the reservation of customs to the Imperial Parliament. This point had become in their minds important even more as a symbol of the close union between the two kingdoms than by reason of the economic advantages which they attributed to it.

Once the sticking-point was passed, the divided Nationalists recombined, and we were all at one in our mutual felicitations on the harmony which prevailed at the close. But as one of our rank and file said in my ear, "If we had not given the vote we did, where would be all this talk of harmony? And mind you now, it was not easy to give it."

He was right, and within six months it cost him the



chairmanship of his County Council. Others paid the same penalty, I am sure, without grudging it, for most of us were prouder of that action than of any other in our political lives. It may be well to set down the names of the local representatives and Labour men who voted as Redmond would have advised on that first crucial division.

They were: W. Broderick, Youghal Urban Council; J. J. Coen, Westmeath County Council; D. Condren, Wicklow County Council; J. Dooly, Kings County Council; Captain Doran, Louth County Council; T. Fallon, Leitrim County Council; J. Fitzgibbon, Roscommon County Council; Captain Gwynn, Irish Party; T. Halligan, Meath County Council; W. Kavanagh, Carlow County Council; J. McCarron, Labour; M. McDonogh, Galway Urban Council; J. McDonnell, Galway County Council; C. McKay, Labour; J. Murphy, Labour; J. O'Dowd, Sligo County Council; C. P. O'Neill, Pembroke Urban Council; Dr. O'Sullivan, Mayor of Waterford; T. Power, Waterford County Council; Sir S. B. Quin, Mayor of Limerick; D. Reilly, Cavan County Council; M. Slattery, Tipperary (S. Riding); H. T. Whitley, Labour.<sup>1</sup>

In so far as we were led by anyone, Mr. Clancy, fulfilling in public what he had privately spoken, was our leader and spokesman.

We were along with the Southern Unionists and our natural allies, Lords Granard and MacDonnell and Sir Bertram Windle. Archbishop Bernard and Dr. Mahaffy voted with us in that pinch, so that both the late Provost of Trinity and the present one did their part to secure an agreement.

In the other list, the Archbishop of Armagh and the

<sup>1</sup> The following, though unavoidably absent at the critical moment, joined with us: M. K. Barry, Cork County Council; J. Butler, Kilkenny County Council; Patrick Dempsey, Belfast; M. Governey, Carlow Urban Council; M. J. Minch, Kildare County Council.

Moderator were grouped with the Archbishop of Cashel and the Bishops of Raphoe and Down and Connor ; the Lord Mayor of Cork and Lord Mayor of Belfast were together ; Mr. Devlin was with Mr. Barrie. This list represented no unity except a common refusal to agree to any compromise. Those who voted in it followed one or other of two trains of cogent reasoning ; but the reasonings led to opposite conclusions. These men were beyond doubt as honest in their convictions as those who went the other way ; but they took the easier course, whether they were Nationalist or Unionist : they swam with the tide.

The troubles which Nationalists brought on themselves by supporting Lord Midleton were answered by the troubles which his group met for supporting Nationalist demands. The men who refused to make the compromise possible have the laugh of us. Neither section of us who voted for agreement achieved anything by facing the risk of unpopularity. We had followed Redmond's policy and we shared Redmond's fate. We had done our best to help the British Government and that Government itself defeated us.

By the Prime Minister's letter Government was pledged to legislate for the better government of Ireland, not upon condition of our reaching substantial agreement, but in any event. Yet the letter emphasized the "urgent importance of getting a settlement in and through the Convention." We had secured a report for a scheme in which sixty-six out of eighty-seven concurred in the broad lines ; and of the twenty-one dissentients, nineteen were a group sent to the assembly with a pledge which they construed as giving them a special position, in that no legislation affecting them was to be passed without their concurrence. The agreement which we had reached enabled the Government, when it undertook legislation, to quote Unionist authority on the one hand and Nationalist authority on the other for many wise provisions which

otherwise a Coalition Ministry might have found it most difficult to propose.

But no legislation followed. Once more an Irish issue became involved in the wheels of the English political machine.

We have ourselves in part to thank for it. We might in January have taken Redmond's advice, and Lord Midleton's declared view that legislation would follow might have proved correct. Yet, what use are might-have-beens? History is concerned with what happened, and our work in the Convention dragged itself on till the great German offensive had been launched and the Allied line pushed back to the very gates of Paris, and Government was at its wits' end for men. It is hard to blame a Ministry for what harm was done in the frantic rush to cope with perhaps the most critical instant in all history; but what was done produced infinite mischief and no good result. Immediately after the Convention's report (signed upon April 8th) had been received, Government proposed to apply conscription to Ireland.

It is said, and it is not difficult to believe, that without making this proposal they dare not have come upon the British people with so extreme demands for compulsory service as were made. But by making it Ministers tore up and scattered in fragments whatever results the Convention had to show for its labours, and by legislating for conscription in Ireland they gained not one man. The proposal, as Redmond had always told them, proved impossible to carry out.

I do not believe that if Redmond had lived this would ever have happened. His record in the war gave him an authority in Parliament which no other Irishman could possibly claim. It would have been impossible for Mr. Lloyd George to take such a step without giving him notice; and once that notice came, Redmond could have insisted upon the significance of the report of the Convention's sub-committee on questions of defence.

This committee consisted of two civilians and three soldiers. Lord Desart, a Unionist, was in the chair; Mr. Powell, K.C., a Unionist (afterwards Irish Solicitor-General and now a judge), was the other civilian; the soldiers were the Duke of Abercorn, an Ulster Covenanter, with Captain Doran and myself, Nationalists from the Sixteenth Division. We found unanimously that if an Irish Parliament existed, whatever might be the claims of the Imperial authority, it would be impracticable to impose conscription without the Irish Parliament's consent. This unanimous finding was bound to influence the view of any Ministry, no matter how hard pressed. But, as debate revealed, Mr. Lloyd George had never heard of it.

I believe that Redmond could have persuaded Mr. Lloyd George to adopt in April the course on which—but after the harm was done—he fell back in June, when Lord French asked for a large, but limited, number of recruits to refill the Irish Divisions within a specified time—at the end of which time, failing the production of the volunteers, other measures must be taken. Here, however, we are back in the region of speculation. Conscription was proposed and anarchy let loose in Ireland. Redmond's words, "Better for us never to have met than to have met and failed," stand as the final sentence on this notable episode in Irish history.

That is the Convention's epitaph as, I think, he would have written it. How shall we write his own?

No attempt has been made in this book, and none shall be made, to represent him as a hero. But there are certain attributes which malice itself can scarcely deny him. All his ideals were generous. His love of country, the master-motive in his life, had nothing in it exclusive or tribal or partisan. His was a policy forward-looking and constructive; without narrowness or jealousy, it aimed to bring the destinies of Ireland into the hands of Irishmen, not greatly caring what Irishmen they were—indeed, if they were in a real measure responsible to



Ireland, not caring at all. In this spirit he grasped masterfully at the chance which the war offered ; in this spirit, he went out to meet his fellow-countrymen in the Irish Convention.

And not only towards his countrymen was he magnanimous. His love of Ireland was free from all attendant hates. His resentment was never on private grounds, and it was without rancour. He spent his whole life in opposition, and was not embittered ; his mind remained constructive after thirty years spent in criticism. His experience of political life and of English Ministers had rid him of any credulous faith in mankind ; yet his instinct was always to perceive the best in men. The friend who knew him best in Convention, and who had seen him in his darkest hours then and long ago, said this of him : " He was always an optimist." The speaker did not mean—he could not have meant—that in those last months Redmond was sanguine. He meant, I think, that he had faith ; that in a country where suspicion is the prevailing disease, he credited men with honest motives and with his own love of Ireland.

If he went wrong at any time, he went wrong by too generous a judgment of other men, too open-handed a policy. Perhaps, too, he may have erred—it was his characteristic defect—in not pressing his policy upon others with more vehemence. He had not the temperament which, when once possessed with an idea, rests neither night nor day in pursuit of it and spares neither others' labour nor its own to carry the conception into effect. There was an element of inertia in his nature, and of the ordinary self-seeking motives which impel men not a trace. Ambition he had none—none, at all events, in the last ten or fifteen years, during which I have known him. As for vanity, I never saw a man so entirely devoid of it. His modesty amounted to a defect, in that he always underestimated his personal influence. A man less single-minded, vainer, more ambitious of

success, might with the same gifts have achieved more for Ireland in thrusting towards a personal triumph. A man with more love for the homage of crowds might have kept himself in closer touch with the mass of his following.

The way of life to which he was committed was in its essence distasteful to him. I do not believe that history shows an example of a statesman who served his country more absolutely from a sense of duty.

All this might be admitted without conceding greatness to him. But he was a great man, unlike others, cast in a mould of his own. Without the least affectation of unconventionality, and indeed under a formal appearance, he was profoundly unconventional. His tastes, whether in literature, in art, in the choice of society, in the choice of his way of life, were utterly his own, unaffected by any standard but that which he himself established. Without subtlety of interpretation, his judgments cut deep into the heart of things. You could not hear him speak, could not be in his presence, without feeling the weight of his personality.

A statesman, if ever there was one, he was never given the opportunity of proving himself in administration; he can be judged only by his gifts in counsel and by his power of guiding action. As a counsellor, he was supreme. He had that faculty for anticipating the future, that broad, far-reaching vision of the chain of events which can proceed only from long, deep and constant thought, and which is truly admirable when united, as it was in him, to a sovereign contempt for this or that momentary outcry. In these qualities of insight and foresight I have only seen one man approach him, the late Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, to whose credit stands the greatest work of Imperial reconciliation accomplished in our day. But Redmond had supremely what the wise old Scotsman lacked—the gift of persuasive speech, to win acceptance for his wisdom and his vision.

He could persuade, but he could not compel. His was not the magnetism which constrains allegiance almost in despite of reason—the power which was possessed by his first and only leader, Parnell. Redmond's appeal was to men's judgment and convictions, not to those instincts which lie deepest and are most potent in the heart of man. That was the limitation to his greatness. He could lead only by convincing men that he was right.

If in the end it is true he failed to convince his countrymen and failed to carry them with him, this book has told what difficulties were set in his way, not so much by those who desired a different end than his, but by those who desired the same end. Yet admit that he failed and that he fell from power. No man holds power for ever, and during seventeen continuous years he held the leadership among his own people with far more than all the personal ascendancy of a Prime Minister in one of the oversea Dominions ; and he held it without any of the binding force which control of administration and patronage bestows. He left his people improved in their material circumstances to an almost incredible degree, as compared with their state when he began his work.

Yet Ireland counts his life a failure, and he most assuredly accepted that view ; for he died heartbroken, not for his own sake but for Ireland's, because he had not won through to the goal. His action upon the war was his life's supreme action ; he felt this, and knew that it had failed to achieve its end. By that action let us judge him, for all else is trivial in comparison beside it.

It is said by his critics that he bargained badly. If reply were made that he believed the Allied cause to be right and desired to lead his country according to his conception of justice, we should be answered that he was in charge of his country's interests, not of her morals ; and he would have admitted an element of

truth in this. Yet, as in the Boer War he had led his countrymen to support what he conceived to be the right cause, even with certain injury to their own, so now assuredly he would not have acted as he did, had he not been convinced that Ireland's honour was to be served as well as her advantage.

But when there is talk of bargaining, it is well to consider what he had to bargain with. No one in August 1914 anticipated the course of the war. No one foresaw the need for the last man available. It was more than a year before Great Britain could even equip the men who pressed themselves forward for service. All that he really had in his hand to give or to withhold was the value of Ireland's moral support. Could he by waiting his time have made a better bargain?

When that critical hour came, Redmond knew in his bones the weight of Ireland's history; he knew all the propensities which would instantly tend to assert themselves, unless their play was checked by a strong counter-emotion. He knew that if Ireland said nothing and did nothing at the crisis, things would be said of Ireland which would rapidly engender rising passion; and with the growth of that passion all possibility, not of bargaining but of controlling the situation between the two countries would be gone. In plain language, if he had not acted at once, his only chance for action would have been in heading an Ireland hostile to England. In this war, with the issue defined as it was from the outset, he could only have done this by denying all that he believed. But apart from his judgment of the merits, there was his purpose of unity to be served. Ulster was the difficulty; all other obstacles were disposed of. How could he hope for an Ulster united to Ireland, if Ulster were divided from Ireland on the war?

Everything depended on an instant and almost desperate move. He might have left the sole offer of service from Ireland to lie with Sir Edward Carson. What he



did actually was to offer instantly all that the Ulstermen had offered, and more, for he proposed active union in Ireland itself. It was a bold stroke, but it was guided by an ideal perpetually present with him—the essential unity of Ireland. To set Irishmen working together at such a crisis in the common name of Ireland was an object for which he was willing to jeopardize the whole organization which stood behind him, at a moment when he could speak of full right for three-fourths of his countrymen. And, when he is called a failure, let it be remembered that in this he did not fail.

This fight is not yet ended, the long battle is not lost. Had Ireland from the first stood aloof, had she been drawn at the war's opening into the temper which she displayed in its closing stages, then indeed we might despair of any hopeful issue, any genuine peace between these two neighbouring islands, and, what matters infinitely more, between the strong yet divergent strains that make up Ireland itself.

But as the mists of passion clear and deeds rather than words come into sharp light, it will be seen and realized that for a thousand Irishmen who risked their lives to defeat Redmond's effort there were fifty thousand who at his summons took on themselves far greater hardships and faced dangers far more terrible. By them we take our stand—we who followed Redmond, who believed and still believe in his wisdom. We wish no word of his last years unspoken, no act undone by that great and generous-hearted Irishman in the supreme period of his life. In his defeat and ours, we accept no defeat; we shall endeavour to keep our will set, as his was, for a final triumph which can mean humiliation for no Irish heart. Tangled as are the threads of all his policy, he leaves the task far nearer to accomplishment than he found it; and if in the end freedom and prosperity come to a united Ireland, they will be found to proceed—however deeply overlaid by years and by

events may be the chain of causation—from the action which John Redmond took in August 1914, and upon which his brother, with a legion like him, set the seal of his blood.

To have served long and faithfully without reward—to have given all of life to one high purpose—to have faced a great crisis greatly—these are claims enough for Redmond that the allegiance of his comrades and followers may be justified when it is judged. The grave has closed over him, and the rest is for us to do, that a coping-stone may be set on his life's labours, and that reparation final and conclusive, for what he suffered undeservedly, may yet be offered to the dead.



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